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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

BY WILLIAM T. SAWARD

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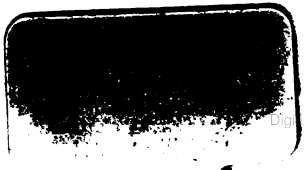

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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ORESTES. A Tragedy in Four Acts.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

A Play in Four Acts

BY

WILLIAM T. SAWARD

AUTHOR OF "ORESTES," ETC.

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
1907

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Fine money

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To

My Friend

HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE

THE MOST VERSATILE ACTOR

OF HIS DAY

THIS PLAY IS INSCRIBED

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.
NAT GREEN, a Player.
DOMINIE.
TICKLE, the Tapster.
BURBAGE, the Player.
R. TARLETON, the Jester.
LORD SOUTHAMPTON.
LORD BURLEIGH.
EARL OF ESSEX.
EARL OF LEICESTER.
SIR WALTER RALEIGH.
SIR THOMAS LUCY, of Charlecote.
QUEEN ELIZABETH.
ANNE HATHAWAY.
DAME HATHAWAY.
MASTER LANEHAM.
WATCHMAN.
THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.
AN OLD MAN.
HIS DAUGHTER.

Courtiers, Yokels, Dancers, Guards, Jesters, Puritans, Players, Britons, Romans, Saxons and Normans.

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ACT I

SCENE 1. Ale House at Stratford-on-Avon. Exterior.
SCENE 2. Anne Hathaway's Garden. Window. Moonlight.

Three years' interval.

ACT II

SCENE 1. Kenilworth Revels. Castle background.
SCENE 2. Anne Hathaway's Cottage. Interior.

Three years' interval.

ACT III

SCENE. Anne's Cottage. Interior.

ACT IV

SCENE. Banqueting Chamber at Greenwich Palace.

TIME: About 1590.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ACT I

SCENE I.—Stratford-on-Avon. Ale House. Exterior. Summer.

(*Curtain discovers several* Yokels *enjoying a tankard of good ale and a huge joke. Loud laughter.*)

1st Y. Now I do call that fine!

2nd Y. Tell us again, good Dad!

3rd Y. An' ye will have the story, it's like this:—Nat Green, the lawyer's son—the College lad!

1st Y. Eh! but he's done with being but a *lad!*

3rd Y. Well, well, gadzooks! he's but a *lad* to me! Faith! when he came from College, with his head crammed so full o' learning that it made him walk lopsided—so that he couldn't see the other side o' the street—well, who should be passing on his side

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but sweet Mistress Anne Hathaway—old Yeoman Hathaway's daughter.

1ST Y. And the making of a fine young woman, too.

3RD Y. Well it wasn't long before young Nat—he makes up his mind to win her for himself. But this is the queer part of the story—instead o' going—as young men do—straight to the girl, telling her that he thinks her eyes are blue, her hair a golden brown, her cheeks like peaches and her lips like plums—or cherries—he goes to her mother and begs she'll make love for him, which she promises to do. Well,—enter Mistress Anne, exit the mother—the opportunity—Master Nat begins to strut and bounce—puts on his Oxford drawl, and says it's all settled—he has arranged with her mother that they are to be—er—more than friends!—And then, without a moment's hesitation, the girl up and tells him that in this case it takes *three* to make a bargain—and if he's playing up for a husband—she'll have the man she fancies, and not the man who fancies her; and with that round she turns, and leaves him standing in the middle of the room.

1ST Y. Well, what is the end?

3RD Y. Oh, the end—there is no end, at least, not yet. Nat says he means to have the girl—and keeps

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on pestering her, but it seems to me he's got his answer—and may well abide.

1ST Y. Sweet Mistress Anne may choose amongst the best.

There's not a lady in the Vale so fair
But would give worlds for half her bonny looks.
Come, let us pledge her, "Pride of Avon," sirs—
"Sweet Mistress Anne," and may she marry well!

ALL. Sweet Mistress Anne!

1ST Y. Confusion to her foes!

2ND Y. The pride of Avon, and the sweetest maid!

(TAPSTER TICKLE *heard singing* (*wings*) *and enters.*)

TICKLE. Ho, Buckster, fill the flagons up—
For the sun was high, and the chase was long—
And let us drain you a brimming cup,
With a tripping step and a rollicking song!
With a ho! and a holloa! a ho! and a holloa!
And a ringing cheer, for the lusty deer,
With a ho! and a holloa! a ho! and a holloa! Ho!

1ST Y. A right good song, my Tapster, and well sung!

TICKLE. Gad! an' it be not good, it is not well—
But being good, it is well—so all's well!

1ST Y. What call you that same hunting ditty, eh?

TICKLE. Odds, faith! I never *call* it,—he who calls

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The song must pay the piper—and my throat—

2ND Y. Would give a rounder note if it were moist.

1ST Y. Good Master Tapster—fill our tankards up.

And troll us forth the ditty once again—
This ale doth leave a pleasant taste behind
That cries "Encore, encore!" Come, drink with me!

TICKLE. Right, my good masters, would ye hear the news?

1ST Y. News! Why, the Sheriff, Lucy, is not dead?

TICKLE. No, but he came a nigh to dying, though.
Know'st our Will Shakespeare hath a ready tongue,
Why, 'twas his song I mouthed to you just now.

1ST Y. What did he?

TICKLE. Faith, didn't he compose an arrant song
About the Sheriff and the Miller's girl? (*Bursting.*)

1ST Y. Aha! sweet Marian is a buxom wench,
And wears fine feathers like a strumpeter.

2ND Y. Out on it, man, don't call a lass hard names;
I doubt me she's no worse than many more.
If greater folk do set the fashion thus,
Can you expect the country folk to bide

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When the young blood is in them, ripe and full?
Dost know the song?

TICKLE. Ay, I could fetch it up,
When I have drunk your health in good brown ale.
(*Drinks.*)

SONG

O, the Squire was as hale and as hearty a man
As ever a land could boast—
His age had been younger (deny it who can)
But I want not a better host—
O, the Miller's lass had a saucy eye,
And a form that was fair to see—
And she looked askance with a witching glance,
And frolicked merrily.
Oho, Oho, in the moonlight pale,
Who steals so softly across the lawn—
Oho, Oho, what a winsome tale!
How sweet is her chamber before the dawn!
For the winking owl,
In the poplars tall:
He knoweth all,
He knoweth all!

1ST Y. A very good song, ay, and it rings true—
Said you Will Shakespeare had a hand in it?

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TICKLE. Ay, that he did, he made the poetry—
There's John now, Will's father, he's not like that,
John knows a horse's points with any man,
And John's good company, and likes good ale,
But he's not a book learner—he's too free!

1ST Y. Think you young Will a scholar then?

TICKLE. No, no—but he hath got a sharp eye for a crank,
A devil for sport or mischief—why, I mind
We went to see the play at Coventry—
And there was one of your great preaching men
A holding forth, denouncing all such folk
As base and tainted with the arts of hell!
And right before them all our Will flung back
A storm of words, and stoutly rated him—
Called him white-livered, and in stirring vein,
Told him he'd rather be a mountebank,
And crack his cheeks with laughter like a fool,
Than whine about the world like a whipped cur!

1ST Y. The youngster's right! he's got some mettle he!
I heard the Dominie the other day
A crying out—the pity he left school—
Saying he was a roving, careless lad—
But such a mind, that when he set his course

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And went to it, he'd carry everything.

1ST Y. But Will is not a sticker—he won't stick—
There, that's the secret of a man's success!
That's what my father used to say to me—
"Mind you stick tight, my lad, the stickers win!"

TICKLE. And then, but t'other morning, the Sheriff
He pluckt the verses off his ugly gates
Odds! men and tigers, roaring like a bull,
With all the devil's hell upon his tongue,
A flinging curses as he went along.

1ST Y. But how knew he Will Shakespeare wrote the lines?

TICKLE. Why, man o' forty, is there yet a brain
In the three counties could a footed it?
It dances on the tongue like good ripe sack.
There's not a rhymer in this land of ours
Can make a madder, merrier rhyme than Will.

1ST Y. But here he comes! good lad, what now?

(*Enter* SHAKESPEARE.)

SHAKES. O, know you not the Players come to-night!

2ND Y. Thy head is all on Players! Harkee, lad!
Such company will be thy ruin soon.

TICKLE. What, Will—a tankard of our home-brewed ale?

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SHAKES. My jolly Tapster, thou hast got most sense;
I tell thee, it were easier to live
A merry, happy life—right honestly—
Than going nose-a-tilt down every street,
Smelling the humbug and the hypocrite!
TICKLE. I'll back thee, Will!
SHAKES. Let all the men be men!
TICKLE. And women too!
SHAKES. Give me the man who loves an honest joke,
That lives in the sunshine and can welcome all!
In this close world we are so tightly packed
That bigots breed as fast as rabbits do.
TICKLE. I would thy Master heard thee! beautiful!
SHAKES. My Master taught me well—but I must own
There's more in men than we can get from books—
Fling wide the horizon, let us climb the hills,
And listen to the winds that bring to us
Old tales of glory and of chivalry!
These are the masters that I love to hear,
Or think you we were meant for dominoes!
When lips are ripe for kissing—and bright eyes

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For merry twinkling, and for guiding stars—
The beacons to the hearts they set aflame—
Beshrew me, him whom God made clean and straight,
Can taste, can see, can laugh, and fight, and live!
Power to enjoy, capacity to rule!
And falls a begging this, and begging that—
With such a mouthing and a hang-dog look,
Turning his eyes where Heaven ought to be—
And donning all the wisdom of the world,
With his own addled sixteen stone or more.
Drives his lean methods into listening ears,
And gains a following because he rants!—
Why, I had rather take a grinning skull
And get me wisdom from its toothless jaws—
Light from its darkened eyeballs, speech from those lips
That never more will speak so volubly!—
A truce to trifling! Tapster, hast thou seen
Good Master Dominie pass here to day?

TICKLE. He was within before the morning school—
And, doubtless, he will be returning soon.
(Looking out.)
Yonder he comes—the kind and goodly man!
E'en now the children cling to his coat-tails,

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And wonder what his spacious pockets hold!

SHAKES. Ah! see, he gives them marbles, thus their hearts
Are coiled about his own for evermore!

(*Enter* DOMINIE.)

SHAKES. Good morrow, Master!

DOMINIE. And good morrow you!
Why, Will! 'tis early for the bottle, lad!

SHAKES. Sir, these are kindred spirits and more kind
Than all the great! Here we at least are free!

DOMINIE. There is thy Plutarch! E'en now canst thou walk
With all the greatest minds of this fair earth!

SHAKES. I thank thee, sir—thou dost much honour me!
The Players come to-night, sir, as I hear—
Have I your leave to listen to the Play?

DOMINIE. Of such strange metal is thy nature made,
That I could not forbid thee—tho' 'twere best
To bend thy mind to serious matters more—
The classics jewelled are with thoughts of gold!
And all the old Philosophies are fraught
With wisdom manifold—these modern things

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Are like unripened cheese, and new-made wine!—
No strength, no body, and no flavour either!

(*Exit* DOMINIE.)

SHAKES. So are they ever thus—all Players thus—
Wizards! who conjure up for us the past,
Bring from the dark mines all those jewels rare!
And call the spirits of the ancient dead
To life again, to walk, and strut, and mime!
All at the bidding of their magic wand!
Imperial Cæsar, clad in armour bright,
Defies the dust of death and walks at night!
And buried Queens forsake their charnels cold
To tell with their own lips some story old;
In jest, or comedy, or tragedy,
The Heroes of the World are passing by!
See here the glittering pageant of the state;
These are the men who made our England great!
Look well, and learn, and mark, from sea to sea—
These were as you—and you as they may be!
We are all Players, playing less or more,
What matter, so we get at the world's core!—
Ho, my good Tapster, Wisdom sits on thee
More fair and smiling than a Judge's wig!

TICKLE. I' faith, had I a Judge's wig, good Will,
I'd sentence thee for writing wicked songs!

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SHAKES. I'm bound apprentice to a lawyer now,
And can supply the pleadings at your will!

2ND Y. How like you lawyer business, Master Will?

SHAKES. Oh, well; so far as I can see, it means
A lawyer lives on others' ignorance,
And for a moiety he tricks the law
By trying to break the law the cheapest way!

(*Enter an* ACTOR.)

ACTOR. Ho, Tapster! I have heard your ale is famed!

TICKLE. The best in England, sir; it makes a man,
If he be old, feel young; if he be down in luck,
At once he rises like a two-year-old,
If he be poor, it makes him rich in health,
If he be rich, it makes him keep his wealth!

(*Laughter.*)

ACTOR. H'm! won't it make the hair grow on the chin!
Or teach a man his steps upon the green,
And can you give it no attractive power
By which the eye with some electric charm
Can fascinate the maid it looks upon!

TICKLE. 'Twill make you dance, sir, if you take enough!

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Sing and be merry too, merry as Lords. (Ha! ha!)

SHAKES. What make you of the Play to-night, my Coz?

ACTOR. The story is from Chaucer. The Knight's Tale,
"Palæmon and Arcyte," it is dubbed!

1ST Y. Tip us a stave, my Prince of Tragedy!

ACTOR. I do remember, when at Oxford, once,
We represented this before the Queen,
Theseus was hunting, and the Quadrant rang
With hounds a-cry, and "Follow, follow, follow!"
Whereon the student youths came tumbling out
Through all the windows, crying "Follow, follow!
Which way the hounds! Holloa! Holloa! Holloa!"

(*Laughter.*)

(MOTHER MARDEN *rushes in.*)

1ST Y. Oh, here she comes! Well, we shall have to go!

MOTHER. S'dam! beshrew me, tattling all the day!
When the sun's high, and trade a-running loose—
And then the rent a-coming due and all—
Your pardon, sirs—but, tans, its flesh and blood—
His father was an honest gentleman!

TICKLE. Well, well, well, well!

(*Exeunt, leaving* SHAKESPEARE *and* ACTOR *on.*)

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ACTOR. Yon Mistress Meddler hath a biting clack!
SHAKES. Old Mother Marden—Oh, she rules the place!
The Beadle, and the Watchman, and the rest—
There's no gainsaying her!—but to the play!
ACTOR. An' thou didst speak it well! perhaps too tame,
But all thy lines ran smooth, thou shalt do more!
SHAKES. Good master, if it stead you, I could speak
My own lines better than another's writ!—
ACTOR. Well, but what make you in this country place!
Gadding with Tapsters, or a wench's face—
Thou seest no sights; why, up in London gay
The streets are all a Masque by night and day—
And you can jostle with the fair and great,
And play at skill with women's eyes and fate.
There, the great world starts on its empire round,
And every pathway is enchanted ground!
Art poor? hast wit? good looks?—'tis everything!
A man may be as happy as a King!—
An' you could limn a scene or two at will,
We'd play it to the Court at Martinmas!
SHAKES. What say you to a country yokel's scene,

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With their vile drawl and rugged shrewdness piled?

ACTOR. I make no doubt 'twould draw the gallants' cheer,
So long as't smelt o' the country and had wit!—
There's all the Art of it, for Lords and Kings
The Player must get his models from below!
While on the other hand, the servants' hall,
Seeing not their own humour, as their betters—
Must ape and mince the courtly and the great!

(*Enter* TICKLE, *peeping*.)

SHAKES. I see thy bending, and will profit by it—
E'en now I have some speeches threaded up,
That have received a moment of applause.

ACTOR. I tell thee, youngster, thou shalt come to town—
Old Burbage captains us, and thou shalt share
A moiety of my estate awhile.
We are but poor and live from hand to mouth,
But know, if thou wouldst climb, and win a name,
Thou shalt eat lean meat yet for many a day!

(*Enter* TICKLE *and* SHERIFF'S OFFICERS *followed by a* RABBLE.)

SHAKES. I thank thee, sir—give me a glimpse of hope,

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I'll drudge and drudge, and steal my way anon,
Thy kind assistance hath emboldened me—
I'll bend the time to the occasion true,
And honour you ere many months have sped!

TICKLE. Now, my good masters, here's a Scholar true—
Deliver him the Proclamation and ye shall quickly know your errand.

SHAKES. (*taking the document*). What have we here?

ACTOR. Deer, stealing, eh?

SHAKES. Some one has played the traitor!

TICKLE. I think I know the man.

SHAKES. (*aside*). We shall want all our wit.

A VOICE. Read us the matter, Will.

OFF. Shall I ring the bell and call for silence?

TICKLE. Most certainly.

OFF. (*ringing*). Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

A VOICE. No more deer, Will.

SHAKES. (*reading*). I Thomas Lucy, Esquire, Lord of the Manor of Charlecote, in the County of Warwick, and High Sheriff, unto all whom it may concern and specially to my good fellow townsmen of Stratford-upon-Avon—be it well known that on the august occasion of the visit of our most beloved Queen to this ancient and loyal Borough, I do pronounce

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that the 17th day of June next approaching be proclaimed a public holiday (*Cries of "Hurrah!"*). The deer in the park—

A VOICE. I knew it wor summat about the deer.

SHAKES. Will be free to all comers—

(*great excitement*)

An ox will be roasted in the Market-place at nine of the forenoon.

(*Loud cheering, caps thrown up, &c.*)

Beef and ale will be in free supply (*cheers*) at the Crown Inn (*cheers*) all day and all night (*cheers*) at my expense (*long cheers*).

OFF. Read us the sealing to this.

SHAKES. Oh yes, of course—

This given under my hand and seal at Charlecote the 1st of April in the year of our Lord 1589.

THOMAS LUCY.

(*Great excitement, shouts of "God save the Queen," and "the Sheriff," at the end of which they all run out in confusion.*)

ACTOR. Thy wit hath served thee well! alack-a-day!

Farewell, sweet Coz, my comrades are astir,
Remember, at the Oxford Inn. Adieu!

(*Exit.*)

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SHAKES. I'll write it on the tablets of my heart!
What is't to be heroic in these days?
To feel the throb of mighty thoughts, within,
And catch a glimpse of greatness hurrying by,
And be compelled to drudge, and stifle all—
O, I have dreamed of moulding shapes and forms,
Of embassies of love, of strange desires,
That could I gain the ear of passing things,
I'd rouse the world to action or to fear!
There are a thousand spirits calling me
From earth and sea and sky and charnel-house,
Out of the silent darkness of the past,
They come in long procession, endlessly—
Some with a silent sorrow, beckoning,
And some with blood-stained hands, a-looking back,
Anon there is a cry upon the air,
For God's great justice, and the murderer's doom!
O, I will woo the spirits of the dead,
And win the secrets from their frozen lips,
And make them live again, all fresh and warm,
I'll re-create the crumbling of the tomb,
And breathe new life into the dying eye!
What is't to be heroic, but to drive
Our onward course through the old sullen seas,
And warp the tide of circumstance around,

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To fit our sailing—to caress the storm
Until it smile upon our venturous bark!
And to hold on, 'gainst wind, or storm, or plot,
Or treachery—or all the fiends in hell,
Until the land is reached!—peace, yet awhile—
For there are many moods, and even to-night
I may be out of joint, and lose the key
To this high seeming—but the mark, the mark!
I'll fix my mark upon the Player's word.

(*Exit.*)

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SCENE II.—ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE. MOONLIGHT. CLIMBING ROSES AND FESTOONS OF FLOWERS. SEAT AND SUNDIAL.

ANNE (*from her window*). How still the air is, not a mouse astir—
Across the fields the trembling moonlight falls,
And makes the river a silver stream on which
Our thoughts may go out far beyond the night.
Now is the world asleep, and one by one
The little flickering lights have all gone out—
Leaving me like a guilty thing awake—
But I must watch, for he will come to-night
And call me by my name, that never sounds
So sweet on other lips!—O, thou bright moon,
How many a tale of happy lovers' vows
Could thy pale beams translate unto the night!
To-day I gave my word unto my love,
And soon again I shall repeat my vow.
My mother likes it not—he will prove false,
So say they all—my cousin Nat—he too—
It is to-morrow I must answer *him*.

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O, my poor heart—so easily beguiled—
But what shall hap to-morrow, so to-night—
He comes and holds me in his arms again,
And speaks with his low voice, like some soft god!
There is a gentleness within his eyes
Unlike the ruder roughness of the rest—
Hark! 'tis some bird astir among the trees—

(*Enter* SHAKESPEARE.)

SHAKES. Hist, beauteous watcher of the starry night,
'Tis I, thy lover, Will, my beauteous Anne!
My Lady Anne among the roses there.

ANNE. It is his voice prolongs the silent hour!

SHAKES. Sweet Mistress Anne!

ANNE. Art thou beneath my window's trellised shade?
Stand by yon tree, so I can see thy face.
And so we'll balk the tell-tale moon, for, see!
Your shadow falls across the garden walk.

SHAKES. O, my belov'd—there are shadows here
Which none may hide—except thy own sweet love!
I am forbid the house!

ANNE. I know! I know!
To-morrow will my cousin come again!

SHAKES. Speak not of cousins, nor to-morrows now.

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But canst thou not for this sweet hour descend
And let us once again spell out our love
In this bewitching hour, beneath the moon?

ANNE. Canst thou hear nothing?

SHAKES. Nothing, my love, but thee, and my own heart!

(ANNE *descends.*)

Here, here, my gentle dove—
O thou old silent moon in Heaven above,
Shed thy soft halo round my true love's face,
Dark eyes that sparkle like rich jewels rare!
Pale cheeks, rose tinted, with the flush of love,
Rich ripe red lips, so full of luscious fruit—
(*kisses*)
Shine on, old moon, and like an aureole,
Encircle this sweet angel face for me,
That ever in my dreams I may recall
The vision of my love throughout the world!

ANNE. You will not leave me!

SHAKES. Not if you bid me stay—

ANNE. I would my mother knew you better, Will—
They do not know you.

SHAKES. What wouldst thou, sweetheart?

ANNE. I'd love thee, Will—

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SHAKES. Then will we face them all. I'll change
my coat,
Turn sober-minded, speak a smoother tongue—
O, doubt not—I will win thy mother round.
As for thy cousin Nat, O let him bide;
No other worlds shall gain an entrance here—
Shut all the gates and bars, and chain old Time,
To stay the fleeting hour, and let our souls
Dream in the mingling foliage, the while
Night's mantling curtains shelter us around
In splendid isolation from the world!
Love! draw thy mantle closer! yonder cloud
Hath many a quiver full of deadly darts.
ANNE. No fear of cold when thou art sheltering
me.
But tell me of thy poetry again.
Dost thou not think the glorious days will come
When all the world will listen to thy voice?
SHAKES. My sweetest Angel! there are times to me
And such a mighty power within me stirring
That I do walk with gods, and gather all
The glowing wisdom of the summer skies
Into these hands; but all the days are dumb,
And I, a commoner. They laugh at me,
And at my dreams.

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ANNE. I will not laugh, but bid thee dream the more—
Let the world laugh to-day, and mock again—
To-morrow they shall hearken to thee, Will!

SHAKES. My own sweet love—then thou believ'st in me?

ANNE. With every thought of this poor burning heart.

SHAKES. I do remember when a boy at school
There were some ancient frescoes on the wall;
And as I used to sit and gaze at them,
I fell a-dreaming and the vanishing walls
Left but the mystic figures 'gainst the sky!
The other boys were gone, the school was gone—
And I, alone, far out beyond the world,
Was borne in some frail bark between the clouds,
By all the winds of Summer gently blown,
Where led the Vision, and th' heroic meads—
Then would a bell ring—or a chair would creak—
And in a moment all my visions fled.

ANNE. You were a strange boy, Will.

SHAKES. Anon, I bent me to my task again,
But most at night—I love the silent night—
When all the world lies folded in soft sleep,
No sound above me but the gliding stars,

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And none beneath me, save where, in the woods,
The world of insects trudge their nightly rounds,
To wrest their conquests from a sullen prey—
O, many a night I've sat beneath the stars
Among these trembling aisles of woodland green.
Bowers, where the Kings and Queens of Fairyland
Hold midnight revels on the mossy lawns,
Beneath the trees of long forgotten age.
There steal the spirits forth beneath the moon—
The mystic shades of the old classic days,
Wearing long robes which their own grief has woven.

ANNE. Sweet, thou hast many fancies, and thy brain
Is strangely wrought with wondrous imagery.
Since thou hast taught me all thy fairy tales,
I have begun to picture in the clouds
Some of your heroes and your goddesses.
Tell me the story of the Capulet.

SHAKES. On such a night as this, did Romeo steal
Across the Capulet's orchard, 'neath the moon, in old Verona—
To where his Juliet paced her balcony—
O, those were bloody days—and men were wolves.
But love grew bolder for the risks it ran!

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There were two families in Italy—
The Capulets and Montagues, in deadly feud—
That even their serving men fought in the streets!
Piling the feud with common oaths and broils—
Which stained the very atmosphere around—
In such a rank and weedy garden grew
Two lovely flowers, she a Capulet—
So gentle and so full of woman's charms
That all her white soul shone out in her eyes,
And gave her such a wondrous brilliancy
That one might think an angel lingered there.
The other, a Montague—a noble youth,
In whom all hatred died when love was born.
Once at a Mask, within his rival's house,
He braved them all, joining the measured dance
With his fair Juliet—while all around
These two sweet souls hung direful treachery.
Yet found they space to woo—the day, the hour,
Sealed with a burning kiss in both their hearts—
Then shortly to the holy Friar's cell
And there these two were wed in lawful love,
Tho' doomed to live apart—till, in a brawl,
The gallant Romeo was forced to draw—
And in defence, he slew a Capulet!

ANNE. O, horrid, horrid blood, for lover's hands!

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SHAKES. On this the laws proclaimed his banishment—
Never to breathe again Verona's air—
Never to see again Verona's skies.
ANNE. And what of Juliet? was she exiled too?
SHAKES. She had another suitor pressing on,
Favoured by all the house of Capulet—
Him was she forced to promise marriage vows,
But four short days, to be a second bride!
ANNE. What did the lady?
SHAKES. Her kind old Nurse was true as steel to her,
And schemed and planned how they could meet again!
ANNE. Good, kind old soul, and did the lovers so?
SHAKES. But one short hour.
Snatched from the greedy night and prying eyes—
And in that short sweet space was all their life,
For when the morn came marching o'er the hills,
He must be on the road for Mantua.
ANNE. How sad a parting! is the end more bright?
SHAKES. I fear not, love!
ANNE. Then do not tell it me—
For thou art Romeo, and I Juliet,
And I will love thee like the Capulet.

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There is the old moon, let it hear me say
I will not wed, but to my Romeo!

SHAKES. Sweet Love, in this wide earth of land and sea—
There are no prisons where love may be bound—
Nor strifes of Capulets and Montagues!—
So you shall love your Romeo—he, too,
Swears to his Juliet an eternal love!

ANNE. Thou lovest me to *this*, sweet Romeo!

SHAKES. Ask of the cold earth if it love the spring?
Ask if the morning lark delights to sing—
Ask if the ice-bound rivers love to flow—
Ask of the north wind if it loves to blow—
Ask if the violet loves the greenwood shade—
Ask if the moon-beam loves this leafy glade.
Thou art to me as freedom to a slave—
As welcome as the star upon the wave!
Give me thy heart, my sweetest Capulet—
And I will rise to mightier visions yet!

(*Twelve o'clock Strikes.*)

ANNE. There is the midnight, mystic, solemn hour—
I must be gone—Sweet love, bid me good-night—
Thou'lt love me still, and never, never chide,

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Preach like the Doctor, in a wig and gown,
That such as I shall with the lost abide!

SHAKES. Never, my Angel—thou hast strengthened me
To battle on against the opposing tide—
When it is strong—thy splendid spirit cries
"Be thou a conqueror! There is no defeat!"

ANNE. Ay, so shalt thou win all the world one day,
As thou hast my poor sinful, beating heart—
That dreads to part with thee, for very fear,
And yet, 'fore Heaven we have but stolen this hour
From night's dull count.

SHAKES. And it shall all be paid again ere long;
Fear not, my sweet one, all that this world holds
Is not as dear to me as thy soft love!

ANNE. I do not doubt thee, Will—a sweet "Good-night."

SHAKES. Good-night, sweet Love! May sweetest sleep be thine!

ANNE. I'll dream of thee—my Romeo! Romeo!

(*Exit.*)

SHAKES. Good-night! Good-night!
O, thou too patent, perishable earth—
Where things momentous fall but to the great—

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How old art thou since first thou saw'st the sun?
Too easy grown—too mellow—and too fat!
Th' opposing tides—the mighty powers that be—
The galling chains of cruel circumstance—
The enmity of rank—the petty strife—
The base-born malice of the churl's low heart—
The growing jealousies that breed too fast—
I'd face ye all—to dare—and to defeat—
Armed with this Angel's love. There sits no frown,
No thought of failure—and no fear of Kings—
Go, preach morality—here is character—
This is God's workshop—where the men are made—
All, all, the mighty, monumental men!
All the world's thinkers, giants, pioneers,
Are moulded, tempered, welded to high things
By one soft silken tress of golden hair!
There's no one stirring but the moon and I—
'Twas here we sat, and yonder, where she went—
The moon hath left it like a silver streak
Up to her chamber, where my goddess is.
That is her little lamp—my guide to Heaven—
O, all ye pure translucent stars above—
Take witness, that our love is pure as ye!
Here can no base and murky clouds combine,
To hide its dazzling brilliance from the sight.

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Look at this world, round which the winds are dreaming—
The sturdy yeoman—the artificer—
The toilers in the hives of merchandise—
They drive the furrowing plough—they till the fields—
Without a thought beyond a night's debauch—
Cursed with their toiling, and their burdened lives,
And half our England stands with empty hands—
When we should be the leaders of the World!
God! for a clarion to arouse them all!
Where are the mighty spirits of the past?
The dear dead heroes of the ancient days!
O, from your mountain heights, for one short space
Bear down upon us where the glory waits—
Pulse, mighty spirits, through the sleeping mass!
And wake us into action! that the day
Break on a race of heroes, springing up,
Demanding to be led into the lists!—
Where all the world is waiting to be won,
And virgin lands lie naked to the skies!—
Seas, rolling on, unbridled, and untamed!—
The Alchemist's dark art, the wizard's play,
The Elixir that will stay the hand of Death—
These are but baubles! all the world awaits

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Chains forged to catch the lightning on the hills
Bridges to span the rolling Ocean's swell!
Method to husband up the waste of things!
Minds strong to tame the currents passing by!
Hands that can catch the colours as they rise—
And gather up the sweetness where it lies—
Minds to translate the greatness of the Past
Into our simple lives and fix it fast!—
God gives the bees the summer flowers a-bloom.
They make their honey and their honeycomb—
The very worms that nestle in the leaves
Make silken vestments for a pack of thieves—
All this wide wealth of beauty and of store
Lies all around, unsought—by every door—
Empires inviolate on the sea or land,
The *world — waits — but — the— Master —to — command!*
We have outlived the slave—the land is free!—
So let it pass to our posterity!
Go, bid the old winds blow it everywhere,
That they shall lead who *will*—they only rule who *dare!*

(*Exit.*)
(*Curtain.*)

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ACT II

SCENE I.—A Glade in the Grounds at Kenilworth. Castle in Background.

(*Scene opens with a Country Dance and Chorus—Cries of "The Queen"*—All *hasten out.*)

(*Enter* Sheriff, Lucy *and* Nat Green.)

Lucy. What dost thou say, Will Shakespeare wrote the lines,
That poacher, whom I might have prisoned for life?

Nat. I know his writing well, 'tis his I swear,

Lucy. Then shall he not escape me now. At least—
Cometh he here to-day, eh, dost thou know?

Nat. I've heard he speaks a speech before the Queen,
And one of his own pieces, so I'm told!

Lucy. How got he audience of her Majesty?

Nat. Oh, 'twas my Lord Southampton took him up,
My Lord had brought a restive horse from Town

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And could not hold the rein and was in peril,
When Shakespeare, happening to be anear,
Just seized the animal and won the Earl!
LUCY. Listen! A week ago I issued this—
A proclamation from the Sheriff's Court
Against the stealing of the royal deer!
In which we know young Shakespeare had a hand,
But in consideration for his folk
We did not press the charge, and now to-day
This doggerel fixed on to my park gates
To meet my eye, the damnèd insolence!
NAT. (*Reads.*)
LINES ON MR. SHERIFF LUCY.
"Here's Lucy the Sheriff, who handles the Law,
"A Parliament member as well;
"With a face like a turnip, an eloquent jaw,
"And a voice like a cracked church bell;"
LUCY. The cursed insolence—go on—
"He's hated at home, he's hated abroad,
"For he grudges a poor man his ale,
"And if just for luck we bag a good buck,
"He threatens to put us in gaol."
LUCY. The saucy scoundrel, he shall hang for this.
NAT. Were it not better to arraign him here,
And let the Queen herself pronounce his doom!

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Hark! I've a grudge against this Shakespeare too,
Three years ago he married one I loved,
And the old wound is slow in healing, sir,
But set me on the track, I'll follow it,
And never rest until I bring you proof!

LUCY. Were it not wise to hold a certain proof!
Say that you get a writing from his hand,
So can we then compare—proof positive!

NAT. To-day!

LUCY. This very morning—ere the sports are done.

NAT. Your hand, sir!

LUCY. Now at last it is set on!

(*Exit.*)

(*Shouts of "Long live the Queen!"*)

(*Enter* PEOPLE *dancing.*)

1ST. Here come the Players!

2ND. Now the motley fool!

PLAYER. Thou art the motliest fool, what canst thou gibe?
Keep fools for tavern, not for tragedies,

1ST. What do you enact?

PLAYER. We play but Kings and Queens and Noble Knights!
And such high company as doth befit
The loftiest minds—we are not mountebanks!

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M.C. And look, ye varlets, take the cue from me,
When to applaud, and when to hold your cheeks—
The Queen's Majesty. Silence! and stand fast!
(*Enter* PROCESSION. *The* QUEEN, LORDS, LADIES, *etc.* DUDLEY *leads the* QUEEN *to her seat.*)

ELIZ. We are your debtors to a large extent,
This prodigality shows a loyal heart.
Since we have been amongst these ancient scenes
Your tenderest regards for us, your guests,
Have far exceeded aught of precedent.
We shall remember all our Dudley's care,
And seal it with our best devotion!

LEICESTER. My gracious Sovereign, peerless in our eyes,
For all the depth and wisdom of thy mind,
That plucked this realm from dire conspiracies,
And set it like a single diamond,
Enthroned, amidst the radiating seas,
Thyself the arbiter of England's fate!
I am but one in this fair company,
Yet doth my word bespeak the common mind!
England desires to honour and acclaim
Her Maiden Queen's great sacrifice and love!
("*Long live the Queen!*")

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ELIZ. I thank you all, that you have caught my will—
Others abide these matters, I am free!
For me our Merrie England and her Fame
Stand first within my heart, as you do know,
And tho' around our memorable Courts
Gather the tempting Courtiers of the great,
Bringing their love tricks to your maiden Queen.
Know that our pleasure is to marry here!
This ancient freehold—this green wooded isle!
The glebe, the fallow, right down to the sea,
The stately homes, that up and down our land
Stand monumental of a people's love,
England, its hedges and its wayside flowers,
The joyous tide of life's contented flow,
That runs like rippling laughter through the land,
The simple peasant folk, the yeomen bold,
The Squire, the Knight, and all my noble Court.
These, and the firm resolve to serve my God,
Have me cry out to all the world around,
"I am a wife, aye, and a mother too!
For I am wedded to my country's weal,
And I have brought up children on my knees
With pangs as fierce as any mother knows!"
I will not marry else but this fair realm!

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The pride of patriots and the scorn of foes!
The very gem of all God's Universe!!
This is my answer—to these foreigners!!!
I pray your pardon! but you touched me there!
Now let the revels go—we must be gay.
What is the entertainment following on?

LEICES. Madam, we show a masque, in which appears
The earlier history of this our realm.

(MASQUERS *appear*, 12 *each.*) (*Trumpets.*)

(1) BRITONS. 2 *Druids*, 2 *Bards*, *Harps.*
(2) ROMANS. *Eagles.* *Warriors.*
(3) SAXONS. 2 *Scalds.* (*Odin.*)
(4) NORMANS. *Mail.* 2 *Minstrels.*

(*All form up, Pyrrhic Dance.*)

(*Enter* MERLIN *attended by* SPRITES, *amuses the* PEOPLE. GUARDS *command silence.*)

ELIZ. I pray you be not too officious here!
I like their natural mirth and jollity!

LEICES. Madam! in ancient Merlin you behold
Young William Shakespeare, of our Stratford town,
That lieth on the Avon here hard by.
We think the youth hath promise—his own lines
That follow will command your sympathy.

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SHAKES. Ye great Ambassadors of other days,
Have we now summoned here upon this soil,
Know that the land ye laboured for and strove,
One with the other, 'gainst the sullen years.
This favoured isle of Britain, midst the Seas,
Is now commanded by a Maiden Queen!
Your great Successor! planted on the throne!
Whose happy subjects, sprung from out your loins,
Surround their Queen this joyous festal day!
Advance in order and receive your meed!

(*Each* TROOP *advances and does homage.*)

ELIZ. That the proud character of an Englishman
Doth stand pre-eminent against the world
Is due to attributes derived from all—
I cannot give the palm to one or other:
The Briton bred his bold free spirit wild,
The Roman gave him order, discipline,
The Saxon—honesty, respect for law—
The Norman—courtesy, and knightly jest—
Thus moulded all into one splendid whole,
Behold! an Englishman before us stands!
Have I judged rightly, ancient Merlin say?

SHAKES. Our gracious Sovereign, thou hast answered well!
It did require so many qualities

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To mould a people that should well deserve
The safety and the blessings of your reign!

ELIZ. It is well spoken—Dudley, we desire
Your Bard of Avon speak another speech—
Those lines you showed to me but yesterday,
Which, if you will, shall form the epilogue!

LEICES. (*To Shakespeare*) Have you perchance the lines upon your tongue?

SHAKES. "That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)
"Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
"Cupid, all armed: a certain aim he took
"At a fair Vestal thronèd by the West,
"And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow,
"As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
"But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
"Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery Moon!
"And the Imperial Votress passed on—
"In maiden meditation, fancy free!"

ELIZ. "In maiden meditation, fancy free!"
(*Rises, comes to front repeating it over.*)

LUCY. I pray thee, gentle Will, to honour me
With a writ copy of these favoured lines!

SHAKES. With all my heart, had I the instruments.

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NAT. They're near at hand, if you will follow me!

SHAKES. Oh, my Lord Sheriff, there is no such haste,
To-morrow thou shalt have thy poetry!
I cannot lose a moment of the sun!

(*Enter a* MESSENGER, *with secret news.*)

LEICES. My Sovereign, here are missives just arrived!

ELIZ. (*reading*). "The Prince of Orange dead!" my noble Lords,
Here is foul treason in the Netherlands—
"We name no culprits—but the States appeal
To England 'gainst the devildoms of Spain."
Shall we uphold them? Is it aye, my Lords?

("*Aye! Aye!*")

LEICES. Gather a force and we will lend our aid
Against this Spanish plot!

ELIZ. And thou, my Dudley, thou shalt take the field—
Make all your dispositions for this swift!

LEICES. Most gracious Sovereign, tho' the call should come
Within this pleasant hour—shall it be said
That Dudley was a laggard in the wars?

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ELIZ. Enough! we will to order this forthwith!
"There is a cry upon the outer walls!"
If need shall be, then let the watchword go,
And launch the strength of England 'gainst the foe;
Give me your pleasure, come, my noble Lords,
We'll keep an eye upon these foreigners! (*Going.*)
LUCY. Justice, sweet lady, from thy royal lips.
ELIZ. What have we now?
LUCY. I am a Sheriff in this land of yours,
And my authority is brooked and scoffed!—
ELIZ. No more than that! Well, well, to-morrow, then,—
This cannot wait for aught! Lead on, my Lords!
(*Exeunt* ALL *except* LUCY *and* NAT.)
LUCY. To-morrow! is it all to-morrow, then!
Perdition on to-morrow—Nat! I say,—
This model youth hath done a goodly stroke.
But I am Sheriff of this ancient place—
And forthwith will arrest him on this charge.
Thou art a witness to my protest, Nat.
NAT. Ay,—it was bold of thee to interfere.
LUCY. Brats! what have poachers, meddlers of the peace,
Running to seed in all the highest Courts;
What is the law for, but to root 'em up?

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I tell thee I'll forthwith to issue this,
And, by to-morrow, *we'll* apply the law—
Or, by my ancestors, he shall hang for it.
We'll get his *writing*—be he what he may,
To-morrow 'll find us farther than to-day!
(*Exeunt.*)

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SCENE II.—Anne Hathaway's House. Interior.

(Mrs. Hathaway *seated, and* Anne.)

Mrs. H. You writing still, I fear you'll spoil your eyes;
Ha! such a pack o' scribbling is not good.
Now you are married—where is all this need
Of endless verses—and these jingling rhymes?
I fear me some of Will's wild escapades
Will bring you trouble.

Anne. The Sheriff Lucy, when, at Kenilworth,
My Will recited this before the Queen—
Requested to be favoured with the lines!
And I am writing it out now for him.

Mrs. H. It pleases me—this Sheriff's friendliness—
For I have heard dark rumours from Nat Green.

Anne. Nat Green is ever meddling with us now,
Since he has joined the Earl of Leicester's Players,
He seems to think the world is his freehold.

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MRS. H. Nat is your cousin, had you married him
He would not have run after playing folk—
And the old property would have fall'n to you—
A goodly home—and everything secure—
And not this restless and uncertain life!

ANNE. You do not understand my husband well;
He is ambitious, and some day will rise
Out of this lowly station and be great!

MRS. H. Cuckoos are wondrous birds, but mighty thieves,
And when the winter falls, they go and hide.
I say there is a time for everything—
Books for the boy, and broidery for the maid,
Love for the young, and cuckoos for the Spring—
But love will pass as cuckoos homeward fly,
And lovers must put all their sonnets by!
Life is of sterner stuff than poets make—
To dream in manhood 's never to awake.

(*Enter* MASTER DOMINIE.)

MRS. H. Our reverence, sir, an' please you take a seat.

DOMINIE. Good morrow, Mistress—where is Master Will?

MRS. H. We've been expecting him for full an hour—

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They're bowling on the green again to-day!

DOMINIE. I fear I am the bearer of sad news.

MRS. H. Not of Will, sir—Ha! this is what I thought—

Now's here's a man, who has a wife and child,
Runs here and there—and gets in every scrape.
What is it, sir?

DOMINIE. Squire Lucy's proclamations 'bout the deer!

These three years now
Have been torn down, and verses posted up—
In which 'tis said Will Shakespeare had a hand!

ANNE. The Squire has newly requisitioned him
For a fresh copy of his latest lines—
The which he read before the Queen at Court!

DOMINIE. Yes, and I hear Her Gracious Majesty
Received him kindly, and his verses too—
He hath great chances, may he use them well!—
But 'tis unwise to fall foul of the Squire,
Here is my Lord, the Sheriff's advocate,
Been at my elbow, seeking news of him—
And I, being friendly, took the liberty
Of spying out the land a bit for Will!—
There's wickedness abroad somehow with him!
And thus I came to warn him 'gainst his friends!

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MRS. H. We thank you, sir, 'twas kind in every way!
We are expecting him, indeed he's late!
DOMINIE. I must be going, but just say for me
He must be ready to dispute this charge,
And knowing early he can clear himself.
MRS. H. We thank you, sir, indeed 'tis very kind!
ANNE. Thanks, Master Dominie.
(*Exit* DOMINIE.)
MRS. H. This moonlight wandering will bring ruin yet—
It is that Jonathan and Sachervell!—
A man should stay at home and help his wife,
And let these scape-a-goats amuse themselves!
ANNE. Will has been at his books these many nights,
Only at Kenilworth, at the revels there,
Has he been absent now for many months.
MRS. H. Oh, he has nought to fear—I mean not that—
(*Noise outside, "Hurrah! Hurrah!"*)
(WILL SHAKESPEARE'S *voice.*)
SHAKES. Thanks, Comrades!
(ANNE *rushes to window.*)
MRS. H. There he goes with his rowdy company!

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I fear they'll prove his enemies some day!

(*Enter* WILL SHAKESPEARE, *full of delight.*)

SHAKES. Ha! Mistress mine, come, just one smile; that's well—

Now you, good mother, for we're all one here.
See, I have won the ribbon on the green—
'Twas a hard tussle, but a splendid match!
Old Barebones beat me in the second round—
And Tim, fat Tim, just missed him by a pip,
When Jonathan and I came banging up—
And, in the final round, I took the prize!

MRS. H. What good will all this bring to you and Anne?

SHAKES. Good mother! why, one likes to win in life—

The prize may not be much, but what of that—
The Victors in the Games of Greece and Rome
Were crowned with laurel, just the laurel bay!
And these were Heroes!

MRS. H. If to be great tempts you to other spheres,
'Twill breed a discontent, and wild unrest!

SHAKES. Mother, the great in their own essence are!
There are no spheres can hold them dominant—

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Or Prince or Peasant, of the kingly heart,
The stars would know him first, and then the world!
There sits a royalty upon his brow
An angel would not miss!—nor beggar child.
I do remember in Queen Bess's train—
My Lord Southampton stooped to kiss a child—
I could have kissed him, too, had I but dared;
Instead—I wrote a sonnet to his name!

MRS. H. We are but simple folk, thou knowest, Will—
And tho' I cannot follow all thy thoughts,
Yet I do well believe thy heart is true!
(*Going.*)
Give him the message of the Dominie!
I must unto the garden and the flowers!
(*Exit* MRS. HATHAWAY.)

SHAKES. Good Master Dominie, hath he been here?

ANNE. Yes, Will, his heart brimful of goodness.

SHAKES. Ah, that he ever is, what brought him here?—
God made us all, but unto some He gave
A larger share of His own royalty!
But, ere thy lips
Shall tell this truant gossip in my ears,

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Come, let us sit together, once again,
As in the early days we used to do!
ANNE. My heart began to fear those days were past—
You are so occupied with other things!
SHAKES. Small time for love, sweet one, when days are full—
The climbing visions grow apace of late—
And all the air is full of moving stars,
And voices of the past ages of the world,
My hands are itching to build groves and fanes
Where all the gods may temple,—on the earth!
Sweet love, upbraid me not—I love you well.
Those deep dark eyes of thine are full of love,
More eloquent than all the stars of night!
Flooding the air with their soft liquid light—
The language which the old earth taught the sea
In the dim portals of Eternity!
ANNE. I love to sit and listen to thy voice—
Thou hast such wondrous visions in thine eyes!
There is no poet like thee to my heart—
When once thy voice is heard along the world
They'll listen to thee, singing!
SHAKES. Ah, sweet one,
My voice is muffled, like a funeral bell,

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Confined within this little world of ours—
This wooded nook and this soft nest of down!
Set in the sheltering woods and meadows fair—
So full of beauty and so full of love—
Is but a prison to me—whose warder grim
Forbids my going forth upon the walls—
Lest I should 'scape across the distant plain!

ANNE. It is a peaceful home of happiness—
What can we more unto thy enterprise?

SHAKES. Sweet love, but for your sake, a year ago,
I would have ta'en me out upon the tide
Of all the life that beats around our home!
But thou my gaoler art, and thou hast woven
A silken chain out of these flowing locks,
And coiled it round about my prisoned heart!
But oh, my heart's love, I must leave thee soon!
Here in this beauteous Eden have I grown
A part of all the quiet woodland round—
One with the flowers, sweet cousin to the birds!
My couch the golden meadows; and my throne
Some mossy knoll; my Court the Fairies bold!
And *thou*, my beauteous Queen (*rises*), but into this,
This fairy kingdom of the mystic soul,
This mossy hermitage—a figure comes,

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"*The Knight ambitious*," armèd cap-à-pie!
His colours, red and gold! and on his shield
A challenge writ in mystic characters,
Which I have caught, and must the joust essay!

ANNE. Oh, but you will not fight—

SHAKES. No, not with swords!
Love! I can hear the voices calling me
Grow plainer and more strong across the fields—
And on the far horizon outstretched hands
Are beckoning me, as if to follow them!
It is to LONDON! that great shrine of gold!
Where all the pilgrims go—and every street
Could tell the world a nation's history!
There, at its corners, are the centuries born!
And there the Kings are crowned—and all the State
Of which we dream is acted day by day.

ANNE. But I have heard of noise and trafficking,
And dens of poverty—and vice, and crime!
And risings of the mob and brawlings loud—
And plagues, and pestilence, and great distress.
Some say this gilded London is a trap
Where many an honest man hath found his death.

SHAKES. That there are dangers I can well believe,
But we'll trip lightly by them, being young,
There is a glamour cast by youthful eyes

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That doth enchant the hidden caves of fear—
The lion-hearted *springs* across the abyss
A laggard would have tripped at!—We'll not fear!
The spotted curse hath often passed me by!
Ho, sweetheart, let me go and win a name!

ANNE. Thou shalt go, Will, and thou shalt win a name!

SHAKES. Which will be half yours if the having's worth—

(*Knock. Enter the* COURT BAILIFF, *handing writ.*)

BAILIFF. To William Shakespeare I must hand this writ.

SHAKES. Writ! (*reading.*)

ANNE. Ah, I had quite forgot the Dominie
Came here to warn you of some trouble, Will.

SHAKES. I'm cited to appear to-morrow morn
Before the Sheriff's Court for misdemeanour,
And libel 'gainst a royal officer.
All's well, good master Bailiff, it shall be.

BAILIFF. Have I delivered up my duty thus?

SHAKES. You have obeyed the law—and I'm the man!

BAILIFF. Then I will wish thee well out of it all—
For altho' I've had many a year of it—
'Tis better not to fall foul of the law—

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But having fallen foul—to fall *outside*
And not within—give you good luck in't all!

(*Exit.*)

ANNE. Oh, Will! What can you do?

SHAKES. This comes apace!—
Too quick upon the waiting—Anne, the morn
Must see me out upon the highway brown!

ANNE. Oh no, not yet.

SHAKES. With a stout staff and all my property,
Within my brain, for I can't carry much!

ANNE. Thou wilt not leave me yet, what will the boy
When he looks forth to see his father's face?

SHAKES. Hush! break it gently to thy Mother, Anne!
I will to Master Dominie for advice—
There is no evidence to fasten me—
Lest they breed lies—and yet, the surly Squire
Hath oft of late turned a black eye on me!
I fear his malice more than all the law!
God bless thee, dear—I'll not be long away.

(*Exit.*)

ANNE. What shall we do?—The blight has fallen at last—

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(ANNE *busying herself—packing a few things—Darkness comes on—She lights the candles, and draws the blinds.*)

There is the money that the cow has brought,
I saved it for a gown at Whitsuntide—
And this small Bible, Will's oft reading this—
But all these papers—'tis distraction here!
He'd better choose himself—this and this—
There—that's a bundle—if he'll carry it—
What will become of him—in that great place?
We shall all sit at home o' winter nights—
And bar the doors, but out across the fields
The winds will howl, and shriek, and play at ghosts
Around the chimney corners—till the room
Grows cold and chill, and I shall stretch my hands,
And call my husband, through the sleepless nights—
And he will never, never answer me!
But he is brave, and shall I craven be?
At least not now, there must be no tears now—
We are two women, and can comfort lend—
He is alone (*sobbing*), what cowards women are!
It comes so quick upon us all to-night—
If it were only day—this pall of night
Drives but the iron deeper into our souls—
And makes our woes seem heavier to bear.

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The world is narrowed to our sorrows all,
And seems some cold, dark, dismal charnel house!
But let the morn, what saith my Will, the morn—
(*takes MS.*)
"But let the morn's sweet trumpeter arise,
"And sound his distant clarion on the hills,
"Angels of hope speed from the gates of day!
"Hurl back the darkness to the nether world!—
"And, in their train, the Sun comes, triumphing,
"Marching across the hills, in splendour clad,
"Dispelling doubts, and shadows of despair!
"And joy returns, and bosoms heave again—
"The good hath conquered, and the evil's dead!"
(*During this speech* SHAKESPEARE *enters.*)

SHAKES. Well spoken, Anne, so shall it be again—
"The good hath conquered, and the evil's dead!"
Courage, my dearest heart, he bids me go
And seek my Lord Southampton at the Court!
Even, after all, this may mean better days—
And set me on the road I long to tread,
But that we part!—part, yes! to meet again
In brighter days—for now I have to go
I'll be thy true knight, Anne! out in the wars!
And bring thee back a name worth all the going!

ANNE. What if they never let thee come again!

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SHAKES. Sweet love, fear not, but only be thou brave!
I'll kiss the children ere I go—
Come, for a moment—come.

(*Exeunt.*)

WATCHMAN. Twelve o'clock—and a bright starlight night.

(*Enter* SHAKESPEARE.)

SHAKES. Hark! 'tis the Watchman, on his lonely beat,
Crickets, and owls, and bats, and thieves go forth
To hide their ugliness and roost unseen:
But honest folk should in sound slumber lie!—
What is it to be honest, in this world,
But to outdo the tricks of other men;
And, by this tricking, thrive right honestly?
(SHAKESPEARE *goes to casement and opens window—*
WATCHMAN *heard in distance.*)
SHAKES. It is the solemn hour of midnight calls,
And all the world is still, there's not a sound
In Heaven and Earth—right up unto the stars,
Only the old clock ticking on the stairs—
I hear it echoing in my beating heart—
Marking the steps of time's unerring tread!
Not deaths, nor births, nor dire calamities,

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Nor rise of kingdoms, nor a nation's fate,
Nor moving passions in a world of men,
Nor shiftings of the hand of Fate across
The dial of our lives, nor hopes, nor fears,
Are of such reckoning as thy ticking is!—
My last farewell—my wife—my child—my home—
Now all the house is wrapped in magic sleep!
God be their Guardian and their Father now.
Let my last thoughts of home be sweet and good!
How peacefully he slept, and as he lay
I stole a bright curl from his golden head!
These little trinkets will cling round our hearts
When we are out upon the beating world,
For many a day the mind will steal back here,
And picture—one at work, and one at play—
And fall a-thinking, now 'tis five o'clock—
The kettle sings o' the hob, and down the street,
The tired teams and all the labouring folk
Turn homeward, with their heavy tasks forgot.
O Land of Home! O purple seas, afar!
O gilded Courts, and temples of the great!
Immortal Fame! imperishable Love!
Ambition's wieldy empire—
To scan the mighty visions that arise—
To mount the highest peaks, and kiss the skies—

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To move amidst the Gardens of the Gods,
To speak the oracles, to wield the rods!—
Give me my home, my wife, my children fair,
There is a kingdom in a lock of hair!
(*As he goes out,* ANNE *rushes into his arms. Watches him through the door, sits down, sobbing.*)

(*Curtain.*)

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ACT III

SCENE.—ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE. INTERIOR. THREE YEARS PASSED.

Discovered—ANNE, *with her son* HAMET.

ANNE. I will not yet believe these things they say—
My mother ever was against the lad—
And easily believes the worst of him.
'Tis now three long years since he went away,
And oft my heart grows weary with despair—
No one believes him, save this child and I.

BOY. Mother, when's father coming home again?

ANNE. O soon, my darling boy, soon, very soon.

(*Enter* NAT GREEN.)

BOY. O here's that nasty man come back again—
Mother, don't let him take me—

ANNE. . Hush! you must go!

BOY. I don't like him, Mother! nasty man!—

(*Carried out crying.*)

ANNE. Well, my good cousin, hast thou brought me news?

NAT. News to the full of all I've told you.

ANNE. Ever against my husband! why is this?

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NAT. Believe me, Anne, it is the more for you—
Did he but shelter you and keep to you—
Instead of herding with the lowest scum,
Taking lewd wenches up in London there!
When you his honest wife he leaves behind!
It makes me speak, Anne, when I loved you once.
ANNE. I cannot think, of late no letters come.
You tell me Will is with the Players still!
NAT. As well and lusty as a three-year-old.
Those womenfolk have turned his giddy brain,
And Mistress Cicely with her nut-brown eyes—
ANNE. O spare me, Nat!
NAT. You ask me of your husband up in town,
To hide this would be falsehood and deceit!
ANNE. O woe is me, I cannot answer him!
NAT. Sweet Anne, believe me, were it in my power
I'd live to do thee service—but you turn—
Reject my offers—spurn me as a foe!
Wert thou to lean on me a little more,
Give me thy confidence, and trust me still,
I'd mend all this unhappiness of thine!
Or quickly end it—which would be the same!
ANNE. Dear Nat, I am in sore and dire distress—
And know not what to do—or think—or say—
If I have cried you false—and all the rest—

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It is not from distrust of your good word—
Nor of your motives, for I think you kind!

NAT. O let me earn your gratitude again.

ANNE. My gratitude! to prove my husband false!
False gratitude, to such a proof as this!
What would'st thou do for me!

NAT. Come back with me, and I will show you that
'Twill cure you of your hatred of us all—
And make you turn with gratitude again!

ANNE. Not if I saw what you pretend to show
Would I believe my husband false to me—
Until it fell from him—his lips—his eyes—
Must say the word—ere I can think it true!

NAT. What if I prove it to you every word,
What shall be my reward?

ANNE. O talk not of reward to hearts like mine!
Would you make traffic out of ruined lives?
I should have thought you would have pitied us.

NAT. Pity! sweet lady, is an icy thing—
Served out to reprobates and fallen souls—
For you the days are young and might be fair!
The bloom of youth still hangs about your cheeks—
And there are those whose love should make you glad—
Why, I remember how the meadows rang
With all your laughter, in the early days—

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'veet embrace—
'rld around—
', rest unafraid—
y two are one!
.e very birds
:ds—till all GOD'S earth
ıd their minstrelsies!
.r, where the sacred fires
. rnal sacrifice.
cast this sorrow off!
.ondrous living power have you

.y darkness and my solitude
've shot me these soft rays of light?
: to see the sunny days!—
'ıe wizard that can conjure things—
'ou stolen some dark mystic art
this contact with the players there?
. I am no wizard, cousin, all my art
ınsideration for your peace!
E. For that I thank you—and do well confess
: you have shown me hope's bright star again,
:t are my doubts—what all my deep distress!
:y, that I fear within my woman's heart
: e are all true! and that my husband's false!

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And I have grown so old and haggard now,
The flowers have no scent, the birds no song!
And all the meadows, once so beautiful,
These tempt me not to stray. I am built up
Almost within a tomb—the walls of fate
Are closing round me, nearer every day—
And soon I shall be hemmed in! then—what then?

NAT. O false Philosophy, of loneliness—
Thou hast so dwelt with sorrow's shadow, child,
That it hath curtained thee in abject fear.
Listen—the poor deluded child of earth—
The mocking maniac upon the heath—
The sad unfortunate who bends beneath
A double burden, only half her own—
These, such as these, may lose the sweets of life;
But thou hast nought to keep thee down with them.
Look out upon the smiling fields again—
How many a maid upon her lover's arm,
At dusky eve, with slow, delicious steps,
Passes along the fragrant highways brown!
How many a silent vow from lover's lips
Is at this very moment through glad hearts
Winging its trembling flight up to the skies!
How many a dark eye glows with brilliant light
Upon the footfall at the threshold door!

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How many—folded in a sweet embrace—
Safe from the grasping iron world around—
Safe from the strife of tongues, rest unafraid—
Because whatever recks—they two are one!
Why! in the lower world the very birds
Make nests for marriage beds—till all GOD'S earth
Seems made for lovers and their minstrelsies!
This world, Love's altar, where the sacred fires
Burn with their old eternal sacrifice.
Lady! I pray thee cast this sorrow off!

ANNE. What wondrous living power have you brought,
That through my darkness and my solitude
You should have shot me these soft rays of light?
Again I seem to see the sunny days!—
Art thou some wizard that can conjure things—
And hast thou stolen some dark mystic art
From all this contact with the players there?

NAT. I am no wizard, cousin, all my art
Is but consideration for your peace!

ANNE. For that I thank you—and do well confess
That you have shown me hope's bright star again,
What are my doubts—what all my deep distress!
Why, that I fear within my woman's heart
Ye are all true! and that my husband's false!

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If I believed him I should live and laugh
At these dark tales.
My misery but proves my doubts and fears!—
All this you play on as you would a pipe,
And pitch what note you will, or sweet, or sad.
I thank you, cousin, for your tenderness—
But know my life hath grown too large for this.
The springs of Love within this lonely heart
Flowed at the bidding of a Master hand;
Neither shall any other stir the pool
That moves now only to a sorrowing breeze.
You come to tempt me with your love again—
And bid me cast away my sanctity!
You know me not! I'll keep within this breast
The memory of those days by which I've climbed
Up to these lonely turrets of the soul!
And live with my sweet image all alone!
The "by-word!" and the scorn of half the place,
Yet will I cling to him who called me "wife,"
And never, never shall they point at me,
And shout with spiteful words and bitter gibes,
There stands a wife whose vows are false to GOD.

NAT. Cousin, I pray you, wrong me not, I fear
My hasty spirit hath o'erstepped the mark—
Yet must I say farewell—and ere I go—

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In parting let me say—when it shall hap
You need a sheltering arm—a champion—
If ever in the future's dark unknown
You need a friend to shelter and defend—
And were I at the farthest end of earth—
I'd come to thee, forgetting all the past.

ANNE. This much I seem to know—'tis I am wrong—
You will forgive my heated words, I know.
There are some days I am beside myself—
But what was that you wanted me to do?

NAT. I thought you might have come to London town,—
My Aunt at Greenwich would be proud of you—
You could have lodgings there and see the Court—
We play there shortly, and before the Queen!

ANNE. And doth my husband hither with the Players?

NAT. For aught I know he will be playing too.

ANNE. I cannot go from here until he come!
O give me wisdom, Thou great Power above!
Shed down upon me but one little ray
To show me where the pathway lies!

NAT. Anne! I must say farewell—I leave
Within an hour—and I have other things—

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ANNE. Stay! I *will* come with thee, unto thy Aunt,
And see my husband once again. Yes, Nat,
I'll to my Mother and prepare to go.

NAT. Now art thou wise and brave—within an hour
I will return for thee—till then farewell! (*Exit.*)

ANNE. A little hour; and then to count the hours,
And pile them up until I see his face—
And then all will be well—all will be well.

(*Running out, crying* "MOTHER! MOTHER!")

(*Enter* MOTHER *and* ANNE. ANNE *crying.*)

MRS. H. There, there, I've sent the bag down to the Inn—
And you can safely trust yourself to Nat.
I know Matilda'll be glad to see you!
Thou must be brave, Anne, GOD will give thee strength,
And bring you back to happiness again!

ANNE. You'll see the chilldren safe, I know, Mother!
And little Hannah's cold—

MRS. H. Thou know'st I will, as if they were my own—

(*Enter* NAT.)

NAT. Well, my sweet cousin, ha! good Dame. Well, well—
We shall have brighter weather before long—

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'Tis no use weeping—come, dry up your eyes—
Unless you'd have the gossips at your heels.

MRS. H. Take care of her, Nat!

NAT. As if she were my very own! I promise you.

(ANNE *embraces her* MOTHER.)

(*Exit with* NAT.)

MRS. H. It was the only way and for the best,
Nat is far wiser and more thoughtful too.
Ah! if she had but married him at first!
But young girls never take their Mother's word.
We have been through it all before, and know
The evils of a bad choice—ah, well, well, well, well!
GOD send the cloud may have a silver lining, yet
There are some things I cannot understand.
She hath a loving and a tender heart,
And never thwarted us in anything—
I've watched the stream of love in her young heart
Grow stronger with the years—until he came—
Not that she turned from me—but all was changed!
Her love like some deep river, gulfing all!
Bearing her like a passionate flood to him!
No more the gentle current's rippling flow—
The quiet seclusion of a village home!
Her heart was all on fire! it may prove true!
She has obeyed its dictates from the first,

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God grant she may be right!

(*Enter* DOMINIE.)

DOMINIE. Ah, my Dame Hathaway, I've just stepped in;

Dull days of late, and we old folk, you know,
Are easily depressed—but even now
The sun is setting in a crimson glow!
That means fine weather, better days in store!
Hath any news arrived of Master Will?

MRS. H. We've had no letters for the last six months!

DOMINIE. "Six months," said you? there must be some mistake!

Will wrote to me not quite three months ago.
He's doing wondrous well, and his heart's right—
He wrote to me about some histories—
And said the Queen had asked him for a play—
When the great news of the Armada came—
It seems she sent command to all the schools
To try their skill before her at the Court—
And Will is entering into the lists!
I think that soon the prize will be announced!

MRS. H. I pray he may succeed—it's hard for Anne—

He must be very busy—but his wife—

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His wife should not be so neglected, sir!

DOMINIE. My good Dame Hathaway—he'll not do that—

I'll answer for him that he'll make up for it.
Why, now I come to think, there was a note
In which he said something about Nat Green—
Nat brought my letters, took my answers back—
Yes, here it is—why, just three months ago—
This by Nat Green and one for my dear wife!

MRS. H. Three months ago—'tis true that Nat was here—

There was no *letter*—there is some mistake!
But, sir—Nat hath but just been here again,
Bringing an invitation from his Aunt
For Anne, and she has gone to Greenwich.
They left together, not an hour ago.

DOMINIE. To Greenwich! on a visit—yes—I see—
I'm glad of it—the change will do her good!

MRS. H. Do you think so, sir?

DOMINIE. I'm *sure* of it.

MRS. H. But, sir—it is not quite on pleasure tho'.
Her cousin brings strange tales about Will's ways—
Saying he habits with loose women there!
And that the reason why he doesn't write
Is that he's fallen a-loving some one else—

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And poor Anne's nearly fit to break her heart!

DOMINIE. The meddling scoundrel, did he tell her this?

MRS. H. Yes, sir! and she would not believe his tales

Until she had it from Will's very lips.

On which he offered to escort her there,

And see how things were going for herself!

DOMINIE. Of course a strapping man like Will, good dame,

Would naturally attract the women there—

But Will is not a common mountebank.

(*Jerky.*)

No, no, good Dame—but it looks mischievous!

(*Troubled.*)

O that is not the way—When did they go?

MRS. H. By road to Oxford not an hour ago!

DOMINIE. (*Walking up and down excited—looking at watch.*)

O this will never do—this must be stopped!

I—I must do something!

MRS. H. If you'll excuse me, sir—the children.

(*Exit.*)

DOMINIE. O, yes, of course—only an hour ago!

Dear, dear, poor children, how these troubles grow—

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This master Nat means mischief, and I fear,
It looks to me, his plot is well conceived.
No! Damme! no—ah, well—it can't be helped.
I'll follow them myself! there's nothing for it—
I cannot let this bide—they've got the start!
Now, let me see—why, yes, the Warwick road—
I'll leave to-morrow morning, five o'clock.
God grant we'll run them closely on the road—
The rascally villain—let me see—the school!
(*Rapidly.*)
I must leave Mister Thoresby at the school—
And Master Todd will take the Sunday work—
Ah, then the Tuesday meeting—they want me—
No, no, nothing shall stop me now—nothing.
I'll know about this letter business first.
Well, well, it may be all clear by-and-bye—
But in the meanwhile, with his rough hard ways
He'll break the poor girl's heart—no, I must go!
All—everything must slide—it shall, I say—
And now to Thoresby—say I'm called away—
Must go to *London*—yes—

(*Exit muttering.*)

(*Room darkened.*)

(*Enter* WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE *cautiously—looking round. Throws off his cloak—goes all round.*)

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SHAKES. So quiet and still! but it is home at last!
Here in the country—all the doors unlocked—
No fear of thieves or robbers—day or night—
There's nothing altered—all so neat and clean—
I'll warrant Anne has just been tidying up!
I wonder if she's with the children now!
It will surprise her, after all these years!
But that I told myself I would not come
Until I'd made my mark! and unashamed
Bring home some news to gladden her dear heart!
(*Raps door.*) (*Enter* DOMINIE *attired for a journey. At the same moment* MRS. HATHAWAY *comes in and lights candles.*) TABLEAU.

DOMINIE. (*In coming, has not noticed anybody in the room.*)
Now, good Dame Hathaway, I've come to say—
(*Sees* SHAKESPEARE—ALL THREE *stare at each other in amazement.*)

SHAKES. And have I struck you dumb, Mother? where's Anne?
You know me, don't you—both of you?

DOMINIE. (*Going up.*)
Know you, poor boy?

MRS. H. O Will, I'm glad you've come!

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DOMINIE. (*To* MRS. H.)
Good Dame, I pray thee leave us here awhile—
I have some things of import to discuss.
SHAKES. I'll see Anne first—pardon a moment, sir!
MRS. H. Anne! (*breaks down*)—*you* tell him, sir!
(*Exit.*)
SHAKES. Is she out in the village? is she ill?
Anne is not dead! (*facing* DOMINIE.)
DOMINIE. No, no, my boy—but she is not at home!
That is, she's gone to London on a visit.
SHAKES. My wife in London—art thou sure of this?
DOMINIE. She left the place this morning with her cousin—
An Aunt at Greenwich had invited her.
SHAKES. Her cousin, Nat Green? O sir, forgive my grief—
I have advanced in fortune and in fame
Beyond my fair deserts—and long I've tarried
To bring some news of my hard-earned success!
DOMINIE. Yes, yes, thou hast begun to climb, I know!
SHAKES. I think I see my way upon the world—
And all the future's mine! but what of that?
Even if I had climbed the topmost height—
And gained the summit and the world's applause!

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'Twould fill my pockets with th' all-powerful gold—
And blow my name across the seas of Time!
But what's it worth—if it is all not shared
By those who've watched the struggle through the years?
That I, a plodder of this heavy earth
Could justify the faith of one poor soul,
Who all believed in me against the world!
O sweet it were to whisper in the ear
Of her, who ever held me as a god!
That I had scaled the frowning heights of Fame,
With all the beauteous landscape at my feet,
And watch her proud dark eye and marble brow
Fling to the Heavens a glance of victory!
O this were worth the bitter, bitter years!
O sir, forgive me—but this is my home!

DOMINIE. My dear boy, treat me as your old, old friend!

And as in other years I've counselled you,
So use me now—for, look, my hairs are white,
The winter of my years is coming on!
And old men often take short cuts to Truth.
Come, now, let's look this matter in the face!

SHAKES. I know, and thank you, sir—your words are good!

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And I do feel your friendship strong and true!
And I shall yet prove worthy of your trust.
The Plays and Poems will be published soon!
And all the scholars give me good reports—
But, sir, I've lived and waited for this day,
As some poor prisoner waits for his release—
I've lived on hope—the clearest star of all,
That shone the brightest when I went away!
But coming o'er the fields to-night, 'twas dark—
I could not see *one* star! for Hope had fled!
O when the tale is told, as it will be—
Of Shakespeare's Comedy and Tragedy—
Let those who linger o'er the written page
Remember all the perils of his age!
That Genius, by which the mind is wrought,
Is racked by torture ere it comes to aught!
The plodding ploughman, with his task well done,
Enjoys the sweets of peace at setting sun!
Those whom God burdens with the larger mind,
The peace they bring to others *they* can never find!
But tell me, sir! this London visit—
You know, when once the heart receives a blow
'Twill leap up from the stunning—all alarmed,
And then a hundred weary thoughts cry out,
And dark and dismal shapes come crowding on.

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What if there's more in this than I conceive!
It is the night! and night has many mouths—
And mostly foul—and full of hurtling thoughts—
Let us have facts! the day—the hour—writ down!
O, pray you, sir, tell me the worst, the truth!—
Your hesitation!—then the news is bad!

DOMINIE. I fear Nat Green doth bear you no good will.

SHAKES. Go on!—Yes—yes—

DOMINIE. Well, in plain words, he came to see your wife!

And primed her with some tales of your wild ways—
Saying that you had fairer women there!
And such a pack of words, I make no doubt,
That racked her gentle spirit to despair!
And, as I hear, she challenged him for proof—
Whereon he offered to escort her there—
Where she could see you sporting at some Masque—
I think at Greenwich—where the Aunt abides!

SHAKES. It might well be! the white-faced livered cur—

There is a Masque—at Greenwich—at the Court—
The Players go—'tis true,—and, sir, you know,
When a man's out upon this beating world
He needs must move among its flattering crowds!

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And bandy smiles with many a pretty face—
And play gallant to many a courtly dame!
Was it of Mistress Cicely that he spoke?
DOMINIE. *I did not hear a name—it might well be!*
I never for one moment can believe
She thought you false! had he a hold on her?
SHAKES. *A cousin's influence—once, in earlier years,*
I think he would have won her for his wife!
But I had never dreamt of that again.
DOMINIE. Ha! smiling villain!
SHAKES. As thou art, Will, I'm sure of it, my boy!
DOMINIE. Thou dost think *her* safe!
His motive is to show you playing false,
And so to win her, thus he'll guard her well!
But mischief's hard to kill!
You see me ready for a journey now—
I did intend to follow up this Nat—
And see these things put right! as they shall be!
SHAKES. (*Embracing*). O my good sir, a thousand, thousand thanks.
When did she go?
DOMINIE. Oh, by Warwick this very day!
SHAKES. To-day! by God! I passed them on the road!

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And now to catch them! what hadst thou arranged?

DOMINIE. I go by Warwick road at five o'clock!

SHAKES. And thou, my good old friend—wilt thou come *now?*

DOMINIE. I will not leave thee until all is right!

SHAKES. Thanks, thanks, in this my darkest hour, a friend
Kind Heaven gives me!—Let me go within—
And see the Mother and my children too—
My boy will be asleep—he will not feel
His father's arms around him—nor his kiss—
And should a tear fall on his rosy cheek,
God send him dreams of Angels and of me!

(*Exit.*)

DOMINIE. He has no doubts of her—and that is well—
I fear the most for *him*—he's stunned as yet—
When he awakes—it may be very soon—
His young blood will be up, and who can tell?
He'll not abide the law to hold him back—
I fear his arm of justice be too swift!
That when he meets this Nat in fair or foul,
He'll strike him to the earth—and stain his hands,
Perhaps, with this man's blood—no, no, no, no!
I must stand by him to the very last!

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For I have watched him grow like some young plant—
And tended him as if he were my own—
Well, well—Ah, there, the horses at the door!
(*Looking out.*)
And Will must ride the Ostler's—holloa, Tim!
I have a friend who rides with me to-night—
You need not come until the morrow now.
Now, Master Will—we must be on the road!
(*Knocks at door. Enter* SHAKESPEARE.)

SHAKES. I've learnt it all—'fore God—I'll track him down!
Here 'neath this sacred roof my vow shall be
To hunt this damnèd thing across the earth,
Seas, oceans, continents, ay, even to Hell!
Where, if he be not here, he needs must go.

DOMINIE. Come, lad, the horses wait!
(*Exit.*)

SHAKES. Again farewell! again, the silent night!
O God! O God!
(*Rushing out.*)
(*Curtain.*)

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ACT IV

SCENE.—GREENWICH PALACE. ANTE-ROOM WITH FOLDING DOORS AT BACK, WHICH OPEN FOR THE MASQUE.

(*Group of* PLAYERS *discovered, and* COURTIERS *conversing*—PAGES *handing round wine and fruits.*)

BURBAGE. So, ho! my merry fool, thou hast done well—

TARLE. But now I do a great deal more than well.
This noble liquor lendeth its sweet power
To put a distance 'tween the things that were
And things that are—as I can demonstrate.
I was a fool—an hour ago—but now,
Keep me your distance—know I am your King!

ALL. (*Laugh.*)

BURBAGE. Thou art the very King of fools, I know—
But pray, good comrade, keep thy methods straight—
The Queen will to the Masque, and call for thee,

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An' thou hast drunk too well o' Burgundy,
There'll be a distance twixt thy cap and hose—
And thou shalt forfeit—who can measure it?
ALL. A knighthood—the gay Sir Thomas!
He shall be knighted!
TARLE. Dub me no actor knight—let me be free
To live in all your loves—but let me drink—
I must have wine—what, would you have me dull?
ALL. No!
TARLE. Or sallow?
ALL. No!
TARLE. Or quarrelsome?
ALL. No!
TARLE. Then let me drink between the intervals.
Then when I get my cue, I will cry "Stand!"
"Stand to your horses! lo! the Master comes!"
(*Enter* SHAKESPEARE—*received with acclamation.*)
SHAKES. (*To* BURBAGE). Where is Nat Green?
BURBAGE. He was with us the morn, and promises
To join the Players at the Masque to-night.
SHAKES. (*Relieved*). Then I am not too late.
Bear with me, comrades, in my sombre mood—
For such a sadness dwells within my breast
That mocks at laughter, or at reason either!

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TARLE. What, cousin Will—some pretty wench o' thine
Hath played thee false? Woman! I know thee well,
Thy glance is Heaven—but thy tongue is H . . .!
I' faith, sir, but thy mood's no compliment—
For every sparrow takes his cue from thee!
SHAKES. Thou art an honest fellow, being a fool—
Myself, I cannot but be other than I am—
My love was always yours, and is to-day.
ALL. Ay! ay!
SHAKES. But one! who spells the traitor to us all!
ALL. His name! His name!
SHAKES. That shall ye learn, when all these mellow hours
Have ripened to th' occasion—then again
I'd have you round me with your hearts of steel!
TARLE. Spoken like any knight; be sure, sweet Lord,
Come life, come death, we are your servants ever!
But thou canst smile anon and quaff with me,
What—fill the Golden goblets to the brim!
Now, Masters, tongue it with a right good-will.

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I give you all, " The Prodigal!—returned!"
An' we not wash you of the melancholy
I'll wager no more sack till Martinmas.

SHAKES. 'Tis well to play the fool, and fits thee well,
And my good Tarleton thou'rt the best o' fools,
But tell me, when you gibe and fling your quips,
And don a merry face before the crowd,
Thy laughing spirit oft would cry aloud,
" Let me go hide from prying eyes, and weep ";
Yet through it all, the gnawing, and the pain,
You needs must go on laughing, laughing still!

TARLE. Too true, my master, yet for love of it
I must have laughter round me everywhere!
With here and there a spicy escapade,
And tho' they pack me to the fleet to-night
I'd wage the Devil to a laughing bout.
It cures ill humours, sets the music on,
And lights the torches all along the world!

(*Bustle going on*—MESSENGERS *from the Court coming and going — One brings a note for* BURBAGE.)

BURBAGE. (*Reading.*)
" Her Majesty the Queen, doth send command,
She thanks her faithful Players for their mirth—

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And bids them welcome to the Masque to-night."

ALL. Long live the Queen!

TARLE. Also the House of Burgundy! (*Drinks.*)

BURBAGE. There's yet another word — "The Queen desires
To honour him who penned the Comedy."

ALL. (*Excited.*) Sir William Shakespeare, &c.

BURBAGE. "She offers to her Poet of the Play
To dub him royal knight—Sir William Shakespeare!"

ALL. Sir William Shakespeare! (*Cries of "Hurrah! hurrah!"*)

BURBAGE. "To be invested at the Court to-night!"

ALL. Bravo, Sir William—&c., &c.

TARLE. Now, Master Will! brush up thy forelock high,
Begone and get thee silken hose and ties,
A rapier and some silver buckles too.
I'll be thy Jester now—henceforth—adieu
These buckskin trappings and these petty games—
We strut and mime with Princes and with Queens.

BURBAGE. Well, honest Will—they wait—what dost thou say?

SHAKES. Say, that I thank our good and bounteous Queen,
For the high honour that she does to us—

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And for her approbation of our work.
For though I limned the scenes, and planned them
out,
I have not played them, neither is it mine!
The Armourer makes the shaft, and wings it true,
Puts his best work into a willow wand,
Yet can he fly it not to find the mark;
Only the skilful bowman knows the string,
The fitting, balance, and the lilt of it.
You gave my Comedy before the Queen
With no uncertainty—each thrust went home!
Each point and vantage, like a coin, rang true!
And all my measures tripped with pleasantry—
With just that gentle using which I love—
Or gay, or sad, 'twas suited to the theme—
There lay my script—a dull, cold, useless thing,
Until ye made it leap to life—and live!
How can I else? the half of it is thine—
The other half shall my remembrance be!
So, my bold yeomen, Archers true as steel!
Ye have done well for me, and for yourselves.
Ye took me in the old days—and lo, now
The years have grown around us like a fold!
Let me abide, and in your bosoms dwell,
Content with mine own rank and heritage, ——

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To share a common lot, and count it joy—
So by your leave we'll all be commoners.
(*Murmurs of dissent.*)
Or say there is a spite against my love,
And ye would send me where the Courtier serves,
To fawn, and flatter, juggle and deceive—
To worship gew-gaws—and insinuate
This body o' mine, that ne'er did truckle yet,
Into the favoured circles of the great!
No, an' ye love me, let me stand upright,
Swear a round oath and know that I am free!
We thank the Queen that she doth honour us,
But, by her leave, I'll be my Father's son!

BURBAGE. This is right noble, Will, and worthy thee!

But art thou sure that this is thy resolve?

TARLE. Refuse, Sir Knight, and by my halidom—
This, this shall never be. Ho! Call the Guard!
Warders! out to the Bastion—Swarm the Breach—
Bring up the Engines! Ho!
(*Enter* FILE *of the* GUARD.)

TARLE. O! we were only rehearsing.
(*Doors at back open and reveal Ball-room—all lighted up for the Masque.*)
(*Players retire up.*)

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THE MASQUE.

Enter DANCERS—NAT *and* ANNE—*front.*)

NAT. Now shalt thou see thy husband's city wench,
Fair Mistress Cicely, brimming full of wit!

ANNE. Release me from my oath of silence, sir,
I cannot see, and let my tongue be bound;
For should my heart cry out, it will have speech
Though all the Court were here!

NAT. I fear for thee, lest thou should'st ruin all!
Lady, 'twere better you should take my word,
And curb thy feelings till I bid thee speak!

ANNE. If thou *wilt* bid me speak!

NAT. I will, upon the proper moment, too!

(*Pass on dancing.*)

(BURBAGE *and his* DAUGHTER, *front—come to* SHAKESPEARE.)

BURBAGE. My daughter, Will, you know each other well!
I promised her some gaiety to-night!
'Tis her first Masque, and I am sent for now—
Thou wilt be hostage until I return?

SHAKES. With all my heart. Come, Mistress Laura, come!

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DOMINIE. They both are here! he wears a Spanish cloak!

SHAKES. A thousand thanks, be near me at the end!

(*Dances.*)

DOMINIE. I'll keep my wits awake—the lookers on
Have double insight, for they see the moves!

(*Mixes among the* CROWD.)

NAT. There goes thy husband and his City wench,
See how devotedly he's tending her.

ANNE. Yes—yes—I see! (*Pass on.*)

(*Dancing continues for a few minutes, then* DANCERS *go off.*)

(NAT *and* ANNE *stand watching*—ANNE *crosses, goes to* SHAKESPEARE *and unmasks.*)

SHAKES. Anne!

ANNE. (*Putting him away.*)
No! I have been thy dupe and fool too long!
Here's my protector, and my truest friend!

SHAKES. (*Softly.*)
The veil is often on the eyes of Truth,
And thus we see the scoundrel in fair guise;
So falls the villain's cloak on honest men,
So stands the coward in the brave man's place—
'Tis all a seeming, and a game of bluff!—

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And we are duped and fooled beyond our bent
Until GOD'S lightning strikes, and rends the veil!
Then stands the naked truth out, bright and clear,
And we're no longer juggled with a lie!

NAT. 'Tis Mistress Burbage! then I have been tricked!

SHAKES. Who tricked you, scoundrel?
Anne, this lady is the daughter fair
Of our good Burbage, you may trust her well!
Now, sir, what's all this tricking, answer me,—
Where is the letter that you bore my wife?

ANNE. Letter! he brought no letter from you, Will!

SHAKES. *Thou* art the trickster! one, three months ago,
And one last week I gave into thy hand!

ANNE. O, Will, he said,—

SHAKES. Said, what did he say?

ANNE. He said that I should see you here!—

SHAKES. Anne, let me look at you—He hath not dared!—

ANNE. O, no, believe me, he has been most kind!

(*Enter* BURBAGE *and the* PLAYERS, *in haste.*)

BURBAGE. Will! honest Will! I bring you joyful news!

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The Queen hath told me with her very lips!

SHAKES. One moment, sirs! I have a matter here
Of greater import than this world can know.
You see this man! he hath been one of us;
Since I have left my home, this serpent crawled
Into my nest, and tried his poisonous fangs
Upon this simple girl—my honoured wife!
But we have scotched him, ere the mischief grew!

(*Cries of "Scoundrel."* ALL *turn from him.*)

(NAT *tries to speak, and is silenced.*)

Thou art a thing so foul and villainous,
So past all modest judgment or reproof,
So ignorant of friendship's nobleness—
That like some brooding pestilential fiend,
Some beldame hag, or witch incarnated—
Spreading a loathsome influence around,
Poisoning the very springs and founts of life!
They needs must be the Devil's underlings,
To stir the muddy pools of lust and hate—
And mix dark potions for the simple mind!
Then, when their hellish plot is seething full,
Ply their own ends—to damn—and to destroy!
E'en now my hands were itching for thy blood!
I should have rid the world of such as thou—

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That gentler folk might live the more secure!
But mortals do not handle vengeance well—
Nor would I injure aught in *God's* wide world!
Go! seek some dismal corner of the earth,
Where wounded reptiles creep to hiss no more!
And hide thyself from every honest man!
And let this *sting* itself into thy heart—
To save you from a yet more hateful crime—
That once you did betray a sacred trust—
Than gold more precious, than the stars more pure!
When naked friendship, in her needful hour
Cried for a champion—a traitor came!
And wounded hearts and violated trust
Cry with unerring voice, "There stands the man."
(NAT *attempting to speak.*)
One word! The future is a scroll unrolled—
Take thou its sacred hours and use them well—
Remember that the mercy all men need
At that tribunal which is coming on
May even now be touched—and thus do thou—
Stand in the shelter of its sanctuary.
(*Exit.*)

BURBAGE. The mercy that he shows thee is our cue,
We are not braggarts; we are honest men!

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And will have none of thy dark craftiness—
But as we toil upon our worldly way
We will *forget* that thou wert one of us.

(*Exit, and* PLAYERS, *leaving only* NAT GREEN.)

(*Enter* SIR T. LUCY.)

LUCY. Give me congratulation, my fine bird,
I'm a dubbed knight and of the Royal Court—
Dost think I carry dignity right well?

NAT. Thou dost, Sir Thomas—to the nature born—

LUCY. But what's this rascal Shakespeare doing here?
I hear his name on everybody's tongue.

NAT. He's making mighty strides up here at Court—

LUCY. I hear he thinks to take the Prize to-night—
The greatest Poet in this realm of ours!
'Fore God it gives me visions in my brain
When I remember that vile stuff he wrote—
And fixed it on my gate—the varlet, too—
Dost think he holds a chance in this same joust?

NAT. O, no; for tho' the Queen doth like his Plays,
His merry drinking Tapsters and Fat Knights—
There's not an ounce of scholarship in him.
What chance has he against the learned men

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Bred in the Latin and the Grecian tongue?
He's not a Classic—he lives by his wits!
Now there's Ben Jonson speaks a Latin speech
As glibly as a College tutor would!
No—I have heard the favourite for the Prize
Is Master Hatton—my Lord Chamberlain!

LUCY. The Devil may take it, so this friend of ours
Shall get a tumble from his vantage ground!
And once within my ancient power again,
I'll teach him manners and some English Law!
If necessary, at the Court to-night!
Wilt thou be witness to the charge I bring?

NAT. With all my heart, Sir—anything to hurl
His proud triumphant spirit to the dust—

LUCY. Come, then, and we will shape this scheme anew—
I'll warrant me he'll write me no more scrawl.

(*Trumpets.*)

Hark! 'Tis th' assembly, now the Court begins—
One word before it is too late.

NAT. I tell thee 'tis no use to waste thyself—
There hangs a charm about him everywhere.
Even now he hath outwitted me again!

LUCY. Tush—tush—why, you are but a mountebank—

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No power behind you—and no name to boot!
But when a new-made knight shall call the roll—
I think the Queen will listen, and uphold
The dignity that doth belong unto her Court!

(*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter* HERALDS *with trumpets*—COURTIERS, LADIES, GUARDS, *and all the Court. General conversation. Enter the* PLAYERS—*applauded.*)

1ST P. Here comes my Lord Southampton—he will know.
The secret hath been wonderfully kept.

2ND P. Tell us his name.

LORD S. His name should be on everybody's tongue—

1ST P. Francis Bacon—

2ND P. O, he's a prosy man.

1ST P. I've heard he came a very near the mark.
A mighty scholar, but I'll warrant ye,
Ye'd be a scholar too to get at him!

(*Enter* SHAKESPEARE, *loud applause.*)

DOMINIE. Will! I hear whispers that thou hast done well—
And even *thou* wilt take the highest place!
My boy, 'tis far beyond my brightest hopes!

SHAKES. Sir, I am proud for *thee*, my master true,

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If I should win success in this affair,
The greater part is thine who taught me well.
(*After a pause—enter* ESSEX *and* RALEIGH, *at high words.*)

ESSEX. Why! 'Pon my honour—this is quite enough
To rouse a man out of his lethargy!

RALEIGH. 'Tis not the first report has come to me.

ESSEX. I've given you my word!

RALEIGH. 'Tis not enough!

ESSEX. Then draw!

RALEIGH. Not here!

(*Just at the moment enter* QUEEN ELIZABETH, *and sees the quarrel.*)

QUEEN. What! Raleigh—Essex—in my presence too—
Enough—put up your swords—enough, I say—
Think not that I have drawn you here for this!
You are too brave to join in tavern brawls;
Let swords be drawn for England, and for me!
For I am England—when you strike for me
You strike for England, against all the world!
(*Applause.*)
You, Burleigh—Essex—Sussex—Raleigh—all—
Are foremost in my heart, and when I will,

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You smile, and when I am in need, you fight—
And stand to shed me your last drop of blood!
Thus, ever, England hath the truest sons!
Our arms of steel, our true and trusted knights—
Our wooden walls, manned by true English hearts.
(*Applause.*)
These, and our faith in God's Omnipotence—
These shall keep back ten thousand daring foes!
The Traitor at the gate! the Spy within!
The base Usurper that would humble us—
While Knight and Squire and Yeoman, round their Queen
Make all their life a daily oath to serve!
We fear nor Pope, nor Devil, in our realm!
But give you all our love, our life for England!
(*Comes down.*)

RALEIGH AND ESSEX. Your pardon, Gracious Sovereign!

QUEEN. It is forgotten! Now to lighter themes—
This night within the shelter of our Court
We crown the foremost Poet in our realm—
Now that the winds of God have swept away
The dark portentous clouds of bloody war!
And all the skies are clear! We may well turn
From the loud battle's shock and war's alarms,

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Unto a well-earned and a smiling peace!
Let learning flourish up and down the land,
(*Low and soft.*)
The Arts be cultivated and restored—
And foremost in their train sweet Poetry,
That Music of the Mind, whose harmony
Shall smooth the jagged edges of the times,
Restore to England, and to English homes,
What all these bloody days have snatched from us!

QUEEN. Where are the Players?

LORD S. They do await your Majesty's commands—

QUEEN. Let them approach—

To you, my worthy servants, are our thanks—
The more because of late we're growing sick
Of all these dishes cooked up from the French.
Our Playwrights seem to think Italian art
And French *bon mots* good food for English minds.
Have we no wit in England—no romance?
Are there no love shrines in this little Isle?
No tales of chivalry—no heroism?—
The secrets which the winds are whispering
Around some ruined castle by the sea—
The rusty armour hanging on the walls,
The broken lance—the shield—the bended bow—

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Those rugged piles of masonry, on which
The hand of time hath set its grey abode!
The clustering woods—the folding valleys fair—
The peasants' thorn and many a lover's bower!—
These—these, and many hundred founts of Song
Would yield their secrets to the master mind!
Let the loud challenge go, the Genius come
To rescue for us all that we hold dear
And drag it from the hurrying grasping years,
And set it up again before our eyes,
That we may see and live! I pray you, sirs,
Let's have our Drama, English to the core!

LORD S. My gracious Sovereign, we do echo well
Your earnest care for England's glorious name;
If I have any judgment in these things—
There stands amongst us at the moment, here,
The Bard, who even now hath touched the strings
Of that vast orchestra we long to hear!

QUEEN. You speak of Shakespeare?—

LORD S. The same, sweet Madam!

QUEEN. Good Master Shakespeare—that you well have earned
The approbation of my royal Court
I am well pleased, the Play thou gav'st to-day
Was to my liking, and it cries for more!

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Thou show'dst us Old John Falstaff and his wits,
Dost think that thou could'st limn another Play
In which the same Knight plied the art of Love?
For therein lies the testing of the wit!

SHAKES. My noble Sovereign—any wish of thine
Is a command, which to obey is sweet!

(*Bows and retires.*)

(*Trumpets heard—enter* HERALD *announcing* "*My* LORD MAYOR *of* LONDON CITY"—*Enter* LORD MAYOR *in state, with a band of* PURITAN CLERGY.)

QUEEN. And now, my good Lord Mayor, what is your will?
Methought thou hadst some rogue-petition here:
So that the matter be of public weal—
And fitting to our humour—know, our mind
Inclines towards our people's happiness.

MAYOR. My precious Sovereign, 'tis our country's boast
That we have fostered and kept undefiled
That noble heritage our fathers gave—
The Sacred word of Scripture's holy light—

(MANY *turn and shrug.*)

And to uphold the simple, godly life,
Do we count precious, more than lust of gold!

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And only thus can this our England stand,
Deep-rooted on the Everlasting Truth,
Rearing her proud head midst a hostile throng!
Yet in her mightiest moments, those who stand
As sentinels upon her landward towers,
For ever mark the currents as they pass.

QUEEN. What make you with this long preamble, sir?

Give us your point, and let us know the mark!
Is there another fleet upon the seas?
For we are ready! Say, my Lords!

ALL. Ay! Ay! Ready!

MAYOR. The foes without are strong, and can be gauged—
More treacherous they who rise up from within!

GROUP OF PURITANS. Ah! truth! truth!

QUEEN. Show us these dreaded enemies, my lord!

MAYOR. Foul, deadly sins, most gracious Majesty—
The sin of pride—and boasting and vain show!
There is too much of feasting in the land—
A lewd, free-jesting spirit, that doth mock
At that Great Judgment on the souls of men.
I tell thee, yet, the mighty Babylon
Shall fall—shall fall—unless she do repent

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QUEEN. We will endeavour to amend our faults—
And our most Reverend Fathers shall take note
Of these shortcomings—but we still await
The argument, good Master Puritan!

MAYOR. It is against the Players and their arts!
Tainted with all the blackest craft of Hell—
They have of late grown fat with pasturage
That grows around the houses of the great,
Erst were they well content with court-yard shows,
Where prentice lads and serving-wenches yawned—
Now have they pushed their persons and their stuff
E'en to the very threshold of the throne!—

QUEEN. (*Rising*). Hold! Sir—an' but your office gives you leave,
We would have no more parleying in this,
But since you bring a charge against the Players,
My good Lord Mayor, and those who follow you,
You shall be heard—and in strict legal act,
Before this Court, and in our presence now,
Produce your evidence,—ay—and prove it too—
Or by my halidom, these curses may
Turn into blessings for the Players here!

MAYOR. Madam! there stands without, in ready call,

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An old man, bowed with fresh awakened grief—
His only child—a girl of eighteen years,
The pride and prop of his remaining days—
Hath, with false vows, been done to infamy.
Pure and unstained she was—an outcast now,
This is the work of one of these same Players!

QUEEN. And can the maiden give the villain's name?

For why should all be held responsible?

MAYOR. The common rumour handles Shakespeare's name,

As being well reported in these terms!

QUEEN. The man is here; say, Master Shakespeare—say,

What have these words of truth—or otherwise?

SHAKES. My noble Sovereign, that I do deny
This charge unto the utmost word!
As Loyal servants of your Majesty,
We have been proud of your protecting arm,
Which long has fostered our poor struggling art,
That now has reared its head unto these heights.
And though we are unlettered in this Court,
Yet have we striven to beget a grace,
From the rich sunshine of thy bounteousness,
For greatness scatters with no niggard hand

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Its royal methods freely! For this charge,
An' it will please you, let the girl be brought.
The Players are here, and thus her eye shall rove
From face to face, and she shall point the man
Who fell to her undoing—then, the voice
Of all his fellows shall denounce the deed!

QUEEN. It is well spoken! Master Chamberlain,
With gentle tenderness, let these be brought,
The old man and his daughter!

(*Enter an* AGED MAN *and a* GIRL.)

MAYOR. Are you Josiah Geddes, a Scrivener,
Of Old St. Giles' within the City walls?

OLD MAN. I am, my Lord!

MAYOR. And this your daughter, and your only child?

OLD MAN. Ay, true, my Lord, until this trouble fell—

MAYOR. Good Mistress Geddes, you stand before the Queen,
Be sure of Justice; but uphold the truth—
Look round upon these men, and tell us true
Which is thy base betrayer! Have no fear!

(One *by* one *the* PLAYERS *stand out, and the* GIRL *shakes her head.*)

GIRL. He is not there, my Lord—

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QUEEN. Are all here—good Master Burbage ?
BURBAGE. But one, who played us false, an hour ago.
QUEEN. Is he within the precincts of the Court ?
MAYOR. Give us his name.
BURBAGE. Nat Green.
CRIERS. Nat Green! Nat Green!
QUEEN. Let him be brought!

(*Enter* NAT GREEN.)

GIRL. That is the man!

(*Faints on her* FATHER'S *shoulder and is carried out.*)

QUEEN. Unto your custody—my good Lord Mayor,
Do we commit this man, judge as you will—
But leave me my good band of Players, sir—
For, faith, I tell you, in this weary world,
Queens sometimes like to sport a merry face—
And break the ring of bondage round a throne!
In sooth, I do assure you, these same Players
Have wondrous power against all cholers dire—
And are as potent to the sickly mind
As drugs and leeches—and more pleasant to boot!

(NAT, *exit in Custody.*)

MAYOR. We bow unto our noble Sovereign's will!

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And do withdraw our censure on the Players,
With our regrets to Master Shakespeare, too.
QUEEN. My thanks, good sir! And now unto the Court
Bring in the Loving Cup and let us drink
Unto the greatest Poet of our realm—
Have ye your judgment ready, my good Lord!
LORD S. We have, most gracious Sovereign.
QUEEN. Why, my good Lord of Essex, nought but frowns?
Come, we will smile once more, and once again,
And all these rivalries shall be forgot.
ESSEX. (*Bowing coldly to the Queen.*)
And I must bear this night before them all.
QUEEN. Faith, my sweet Lord, if thus the choler shows
We needs must seek a new Cup-bearer, too,
And in our royal will we do propose
To honour him who leads the world of Song—
Give us your verdict in the open Court,
And pray that it may fall where lies my own.
LORD S. So please your Majesty, before the Court
We do adjudge the foremost place and name
To Master William Shakespeare.

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ALL. Hurrah! hurrah! Shakespeare! Shakespeare!

(*Enthusiasm, congratulations, &c.*)

QUEEN. A fair and just award, so say we all.

ALL. Ay! Ay!

QUEEN. Your pardon, lords, if for a moment's space
I touch another theme—
The duty that lies nearest to our heart
Is, here before our brave and loyal Court,
To make a full acknowledgment to those
Who nobly fought for England on the seas!
Their glorious victory stands out to-day
Amongst the proudest of this ancient land,
And, as it stands, within the years that pass
It shall but greater grow in magnitude
Until the centuries that close around
Leave it above—one solitary peak!
Snow-crested with the years—alone—sublime!
And you will point your children to its heights—
"There, there, your fathers fought to keep you free!
To win for you a wider heritage!"
And as the flag of England is unfurled
Down to the farthest sea—never the call
Of those oppressed shall come to her in vain!

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But she shall strive to rule in peace—and hold
The scales of Justice balanced to the world!
In memory of this great enterprise
Whereby much credit to our land shall flow,
We did ordain our scholars near and far
Unto this joust and feast of Literature!
Our learned doctors of the schools have given
Their wisest judgment to our royal cause—
In prose—and poetry—alike, the gentler art
Is the more potent messenger of peace!
The greatest teacher, and the sweetest guide—
Yet tho' to-day we yield to this the palm,
I have to add, that sterner prose hath found
A mighty mind, of which our land is proud—
And Francis Bacon stands acknowledged thus!
Of rare Ben Jonson, and his honest wit,
Our gallant Hatton, too, among the rest,
Together with a dozen scholars more,—
But there's a name which stands above them all,
A star just rising on th' horizon's marge,
Which, in the cycle of the years, shall ride
Like some proud planet in the evening sky!
'Tis *William Shakespeare*, Bard of Stratford Town,
One of the faithful Players of our Court!
To him do we give place, and crown him here

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Before you all, most worthy of our love!
(SHAKESPEARE *kneels.*)
Immortal Bard! we do not honour thee;
Thou art above us, even in these spheres—
Thy crown shall yet be wrought in ages far,
Whose throbbings, and whose deep pulsations wide,
We faintly feel like the on-coming tide.
When men look back for landmarks, on the way—
By which our England rose, and kept its sway—
Forged its proud progress and dominion free
Unto the utmost of the farthest sea!—
A line of monarchs, whose majestic tread
Still echoes through the land they habited!
A race of heroes on the sea, and land!
Whose voice were still, but for thy magic hand!
There shall a grey form, in the distance, loom,
One foot in Heaven, and one upon the tomb!
Who touched the gamut of all Nature's store,
Laid bare the human heart for evermore!
The Bard of Avon, and of all mankind!
Our Shakespeare of the Universal mind!
(*Decorates* SHAKESPEARE *with a chain of gold. Applause from all the Court.*)

QUEEN. Now what remains shall flow in smiles and joy—

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Come, good Sir Shakespeare, we would honour thee—
But thou'lt have none of us, indeed! indeed!
Thou art of thine own metal, no alloy
Could ever tarnish such a vein as thine!
But give us your request, an' it shall fall
Within our breadth and compass—it is thine.

SHAKES. My noble Sovereign, and this royal Court,
There is a sheltered haven of repose,
Whose fresh green bowers and folding valleys fair
Invite my wandering steps to turn once more,
Where all this strife comes not, nor pride, nor power.
But give me leave to go unto my home—
That I may give myself unto myself—
And those whose love is dearer far to me
Than all that this world holds—
The applause of multitudes—the rank of place,
The fierce ambitions, and the greed of power—
The poet seeks not these—but solitude,
And silence round him, like a lofty dome,
Where all the greatest thoughts in rhythm roll—
And all the incense clouds are lover's vows,
And purest prayers of heroes, and of saints;—
The world would stifle, but could not enchain,
Where all the far-off ebb and flow of things
Breaks like some distant murmuring on the shore—

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And sorrow's undertones die at the door,
But give me this, and let me go in peace!

QUEEN. We would not stay thee from so sweet a task,
But, ere we go, where is this jewel rare,
This Guardian of thy home, thy honoured wife?

(ANNE, *who has been in the background, comes forward.*) (SHAKESPEARE, *leading her forward, presents her to the* QUEEN.)

QUEEN. Sweet Mistress Shakespeare, thou may'st well be proud,
To bear a name that sounds so loud to-day—

(*Rising and joining their hands.*)

May all the years smile on your happiness,
Unto the end—Wear but thy jewel bravely,
And in its sacred light shalt thou be blest.

Tableau.

(*Curtain.*)

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